

G2 pages 12-13

The media regularly contacted him in the early years of the crisis "as I appeared to be one of a very small number of people prepared to give an opinion and an even smaller number of people actually concerned by the epidemic's implications."

third time in a week. The BBC was ignoring real issues because "the media is obsessed with press and obsessed with itself", he said.

Yesterday's exchanges were robust but good-natured in a corner of government where light is rarely shown. Government briefings are not televised or recorded for radio, though last year a Cabinet Office report recommended they be put on the record to minimise confusion and media hype.

There are certain things the media are neuragic about," said Mr Campbell. "One is Murdoch and one is Labour spin doctors. Put the two together and you can have an orgy of self-indulgence for days. Meanwhile, the Government is doing things, on crime, on jobs, health and education, that matter to real people, and modernising a whole range of ways Britain is governed."

EU presidency, page 5

were proved as a result of the police investigation "they would amount to the systematic maltreatment of these prisoners".

A legal dossier drawn up by solicitors, Hickman and Rose, contains details of alleged serious assaults on at least eight inmates, and possibly many more.

They include accusations of racism, beatings and intimidation. One inmate has claimed he was assaulted by staff almost every day for a month while another claimed his head had been stamped on and banged against a wall. In one case the allegations amount to a claim of torture.

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Sketch

Travelling back in time with Dobbo



Simon Hoggart

A eerie sound could be heard in the Commons. Young people growing up in ravaged communities... the greatest concentration of poverty in the country...

It was weird. Some of us could hardly believe our ears, and wondered whether, under the influence of 'listed substances' (Federation ale) we had travelled back in time.

A Labour cabinet minister was actually talking about the poorest people in the country, as if they deserved our attention. It was astounding. Could this be the same New Labour party which has made meeting the needs of BMW owners its first priority?

Or who recently produced a Budget hailed by the middle classes for its failure to extract more money from the middle classes? Which seems more concerned about people with mortgages than those with pneumoconiosis? More anxious to placate fox hunters than single parents?

Apparently so. Of course the minister concerned was Frank Dobson, whom we have always known to be an unreconstructed Old Labour bearded lefite. But even so, listening to him speak was like relaxing in a warm nostalgic bath: a scratchy old record of the Internationale, the distant shouts of the Jarrow marchers, a half-forgotten speech by Nye Bevan.

Dobbo was announcing the first 11 Health Action Zones, where extra cash will be made available to tackle specific problems in particular deprived areas. Heart problems in South Yorkshire, for example, or under-age pregnancies in south central London. The idea is to get hospitals, doctors, councils, voluntary groups and local businesses working together by cutting out bureaucracy.

Some hope, you might think. Like *Leyland*, bureau-

cracies grow with great speed, and resist attempts to prune them. But the fact remained: Dobbo was doing this in order to reduce inequality.

As he put it: "Our commitment is to drive up the standards of health amongst the poorest in our country at a faster rate than for the general population."

You may think you have heard this kind of thing before, and quite possibly you have. But not from this lot. Mr Patrick Nicholls had been put up by the Tories to reply. I would have paid more attention to what he was saying but for the fact that his hair is of the gigantic, bouffant variety favoured by President Clinton's girlfriends. I wondered idly what might happen if they ever met at some dimly-lit soirée.

Mr Nicholls could hardly argue for greater inequality (though why do I have an awful feeling that Harriet Harman possibly could?). Instead he assailed Dobbo for using jargon and acronyms, and finally produced the Tories' latest catch-all insult: "Nanny-statism!"

What Mr Nicholls doesn't realise, and Mr Dobson does, is that some people are so poor and so badly educated and so often the recipients of so many dirty ends of so many sticks, that they actually need a nanny. We can't all be proud and self-reliant.

"I want to see children everywhere born with the chance of a decent life expectation, the hope of a good job and of a happy marriage, producing healthy children," Dobbo went on, very quietly. "In my limited and humble way, as long as I stand at this dispatch box I will remain committed to that. And my colleagues are behind me."

Mr Dobson resembled a can of cold lager: refreshing the parts other ministers try to avoid.

My only quibble with Mr Dobson is his silly attacks upon this paper. "I'll be praised in a leading article in the Guardian if I'm not careful," he said at one point. It was his second attack. We know New Labour hates us — they make it clear whenever they can — but we'll be still trying to be reasonable and fair when the stateless billionaire media moguls have long since abandoned them.

Review

Internal exile of a blocked writer

Michael Billington

Give Me Your Answer, Do! Hampstead Theatre

LIKE all Irish writers, Brian Friel is obsessed by exile and homecoming. But his latest, very Chekhovian, play is about the writer's sense of exile from self: and it goes on to suggest that most of us stagger through life adopting a series of masks to disguise our inner uncertainty.

The setting, as so often with Friel, is Ballybeg in County Donegal. The dilemma facing the hero — a blocked, hard-up novelist called Tom Connolly — is very direct: should he sell his manuscripts to a rich Texan university, assuming they make a handsome offer, or should he persist in his obstinate, draining penury?

That is the peg for an exploration of human insecurity. Played with absolute conviction by Niall Buggy, Connolly is an awkward, shambling figure, ill at ease in company and only truly himself when weaving fantasies to amuse his mute, institutionalised 22-year-old daughter. As his wife, Daisy, says of writers: "You're unhappy in the world you create; so you drift through life like exiles from both places."

This is much more, however, than an incestuous play about the plight of the writer: with non-judgmental compas-

sion, Friel implies that most of us lead lives of quiet desperation. Daisy herself is a victim of her husband's need for rural solitude. Her parents, visiting for the weekend, are little happier: her father is a kleptomaniac cocktail pianist and her mother a sourly arthritic ex-doctor. A popular Irish novelist and his wife, who drop by with booze and bitchery, indulge in Albee-esque bouts of ritual humiliation. Even the Texan university's agent is a driven figure.

For all this, the play is very funny. The sight of the two writers together, joined at the hip by fraternal insecurity and mutual envy, has a hilarious accuracy: even the casual cruelties people inflict on one another are hilarious. In the end the play moves on by Friel's insistence that we all play roles to camouflage our uncertainty: only writers are more likely to reveal the face behind the mask.

Robin Lefevre's production is beautifully alert to the play's tragicomic mood. Geraldine James as the gin-swilling Daisy, John Woodvine and Margaret Tyzack as her ill-matched parents and Gawn Grainger and Sorcha Cusack as the warring visitors all give performances of heart-breaking truth. After the dip of *Wonderful Tennessee*, this is Friel back on top form, writing with a wrenching honesty and understanding.

This review appeared in some editions yesterday.

Chancellor insists short-term action to help exporters would bring back boom-and-bust economy

Brown firm on strong pound

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

GORDON Brown stood firm yesterday against pressure from exporters to take action to bring down the value of the pound, insisting that giving in to short-term demands would only result in a return to a boom-and-bust economy.

Giving evidence on the Budget to the Treasury select committee, the Chancellor said economic policy had been transformed since Labour came to power last May, with the Bank of England given freedom from political interference to set interest rates, and new rules established to ensure the Government acted responsibly with the public finances.

These changes offered the

best guarantee of low inflation, job growth and a stable and competitive pound in the medium term, rather than short-term measures such as scrapping the Government's inflation target or intervening on the foreign exchanges to stem sterling's rise, Mr Brown said.

Sterling has risen more than 30 per cent over the last two years against the currencies of the UK's main trading partners, and since the Budget has had another leg up against the mark. It finished trading last night at DM 3.096, the highest close since July.

"I do not think it would be right for us to be diverted in our long-term objectives of creating high levels of growth and employment... by short-term pressures, which if we gave in to them would merely lead to a return to stop-go policies," he told the committee.



Gordon Brown: 'The long-term view must be taken'

"The long-term view must be taken, not just by government but by industry and the financial community in looking at the situation exporters face. We should all be long-termists now."

City analysts have blamed the pound's surge on Mr Brown's alleged failure to target exporters directly on March 17. This has reinforced expectations that interest rates will have to rise to keep the lid on inflation.

But Mr Brown emphasised to the committee that his two budgets together had sucked £17 billion out of the economy, via sharp rises in petrol duty, a cut in mortgage tax relief and other measures which would hit consumers.

This represented the highest fiscal tightening since the early 1980s and had made a "significant contribution" to rebalancing the economy away from consumption towards exports.

Despite the currency's strength, exports were set to rise by between 3 and 3.5 per cent in 1998, he said.

Turning to allegations that his officials had been secretly briefing against the Bank of England, and blaming the pound's strength on its failure to give a clear signal on the future direction of interest rates, Mr Brown denied he had been trying to second-guess the Governor, Eddie George, or the monetary policy committee, which has day-to-day control over the cost of borrowing.

"I have not only got every confidence in the Governor — and we have just reappointed him for a further five-year term — but also I have confidence in the system we have created," he said.

Having given the Bank freedom from political interference, he was hardly likely to try to get involved in its decisions.

In a speech in Manchester last night, Adair Turner, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, called on the Bank to indicate whether or not interest rates, at 7.25 per cent, had peaked. That could help put the pound on a downward path. But long term the only realistic prospect of freeing exporters from exchange rate swings may be to join economic and monetary union.

"While in an ideal world EMU would go ahead with more complete fiscal conver-

Fury as boy who slashed pupil back at school

Virek Chaudhary
Education Correspondent

AN EIGHT-year-old boy who was slashed across the face in a premeditated playground attack is being kept away from school by his parents because the attacker was allowed to return within two weeks and was placed in the same class as the victim's younger sister.

Manjit Singh, whose son Karanpal was attacked at Hambrough primary school in Southall, west London, by a nine-year-old pupil, has also withdrawn his four-year-old daughter from the school, claiming that both are too frightened to attend while the attacker remains at the school.

Karanpal was attacked in February as he played with friends. The attacker had come home for lunch where he is believed to have constructed a knife by sticking the blade of a pencil sharpener on to the end of a stick.

The attacker, who cannot be named for legal reasons, returned from lunch, walked up to Karanpal and slashed him across the side of the face, leaving him with a 6in scar. Doctors say that if the cut had gone an inch further it could have severed an artery and killed Karanpal instantly.

Mr Singh plans to sue the



Karanpal Singh has a 6in scar from the attack. Doctors say that if the blade had gone an inch further it could have killed him. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GOWMAN

school for negligence, claiming that it failed to provide a safe environment for his son, handled the incident badly and knew that the attacker had a history of violence and bringing knives to school.

Following the attack the school failed to call an ambulance and Mr Singh, who arrived an hour later after being called by teachers, took his son to hospital.

Mr Singh said: "When the doctor saw him he said that Karanpal was lucky to be alive. We have complained to the school before about the behaviour of this boy but they have not done any-

thing. It's quite clear that this boy needs proper help but it's disgusting the way the school have handled the incident."

A spokeswoman for the London Borough of Ealing, the local authority for the school, confirmed yesterday that the attacker had been caught in possession of a penknife last year and that no ambulance was called for Karanpal. "The school did not follow normal procedures and no ambulance was called [for Karanpal]. The local education authority are looking into the matter."

The attacker was tempo-

rarily excluded last year after he kicked Karanpal in the head, the second time he had attacked him.

Mr Singh, aged 34, said that he was forced to resort to legal action because the attacker was allowed to return to school after the slashing and placed in the nursery section of the school, which is attended by his daughter. He claimed that he had written to the school and governors complaining about the boy's return but had received no reply.

Mr Singh said he would not allow his children to return to the school until

the attacker had been expelled.

"Karanpal is totally traumatised by the attack. He doesn't want to go out or show his face and he is having nightmares. He keeps thinking someone is going to attack him with a knife. The attacker should not be in the school, he is a danger to both pupils and teachers. What sort of school is it that allows a boy to return just two weeks after he nearly killed my son?"

Doctors have said that Karanpal will need specialist surgery to his face and counselling to help him overcome his trauma.

Ealing Council said: "The boy [attacker] was allowed to return to school following counselling. He was being taught alone in a building adjacent to the nursery. The headteacher is in consultation with the governing body and is reviewing the situation. At the moment, none of the three children concerned are at school."

Jaswinder Gill, the Singhs' solicitor, said: "Complaints have been made about the attacker before and quite clearly the school was aware of his history. It's the school's duty to take preventive action."

Rail wars loom as regulator boosts competition

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

THE prospect of rail wars erupting between companies such as Richard Branson's Virgin Trains and Stagecoach emerged yesterday when the rail regulator, John Swift, revealed plans to open up the industry to increased competition.

The rail companies will be able to challenge each other for business on the same piece of track, but they will have to show that they are putting the interests of passengers first.

Mr Swift insisted there would be no "cherry picking" of lucrative routes between London and the North and West, but some industry ana-

lysts thought the move would bring some of the bigger players into a head-on contest for supremacy. They said that passengers did not want to be confronted by two operators having a battle at Euston station for business to Manchester and Glasgow.

"You just can't have rival trains knocking hell out of each other by leaving every few minutes," one said. "In this industry, unlike buses where you can overtake, you have to keep to the same track."

Chris Moyes, commercial director of the Go-Ahead Group, which operates Thames Trains and has a part share in Thameslink, said: "We want a regime which allows sensible, rational expansion. We don't want to see the

aggressive, cut-throat competition that has given the bus industry a bad reputation."

Mr Moyes said he wanted the kind of deal which Thames has just agreed with Great Western Trains, with a direct service between Oxford and Bristol. GWT has access rights to Bristol, and Thames will provide the trains.

Keith Bill, national secretary of the Save our Railways campaign group, said: "It will be cash from chaos, as companies take each other on, running services in direct competition on the most profitable routes."

He said that rail battles were already taking place. "Commuters are losing out as companies switch their commuter trains to more lucrative routes like London to Bir-

mingham and Gatwick. Mr Swift's proposals will turn these battles into full-scale rail wars, in which passengers will be the loser."

The Government cautiously welcomed the regulator's move, made under powers given to him by the Tories. But the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, is concerned that Mr Swift should be seen to act slowly in an industry where privatisation has still not bedded down.

This is reflected in the regulator's statement. Only 20 per cent of the industry will be involved in the first stage of the plan, from September next year, and they have will have to clear timetables with the regulator and track access with Railtrack before they will be allowed to proceed.

Mr Swift said competition brought pressures for innovative products and a reduction in costs. "Passengers can reasonably expect to see the emergence of more attractive fares packages, higher frequency of service on popular routes and new direct services. It is my role to ensure that competition... is in the public interest."

He said he had consulted local passenger watchdog groups and all the train operators, and the majority supported change. He hoped it would lead to new services, such as links to airports, shopping and leisure centres, and park and ride sites.

The regulator says he will make sure that "uncontrolled development" of new services does not lead to a decline in

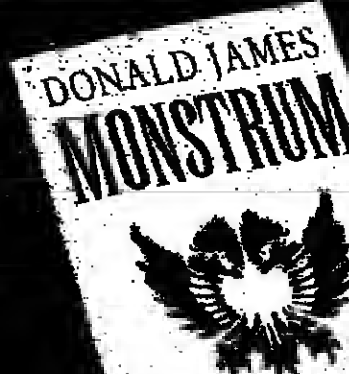
important social services. There is a shortage of rolling stock, worsened by an 11 per cent increase in passenger mileage since privatisation, partly due to an improved economy. If companies try to move rolling stock away from areas where services are running at a loss into highly profitable areas, he will refuse to approve them.

His plan could be speedily completed. Interested rail companies must submit their schemes by this June for approval by September, so that timetables can be prepared for autumn next year.

Mr Swift's office said: "Our plan will keep operators on their toes. If Virgin and Stagecoach think they can do a better job on a rival route, they are welcome to apply."

There's chilling... and then there's

CHILLING...



IN BOOKSHOPS NOW

صدا من الاله

Britain leads crusade against paedophiles

Cook cracks down on child sex tourism

International co-operation to target burgeoning underage pornography

Lucy Ward
Political Correspondent

BRITISH police will alert their counterparts in South-east Asia whenever known paedophiles travel abroad under an international crackdown on child sex tourism being launched by Robin Cook today.

In the latest development in the Government's ethical foreign policy, the Foreign Secretary will unveil plans for greater co-operation and intelligence-sharing between police and other agencies in combating the growing problem of child prostitution in countries including Thailand, where an estimated 250,000 child sex tourists travel from the West each year.

Mr Cook, who writes in today's *Guardian*, will announce a conference in London in October bringing together experts on the sex trade from police forces, governments and charities in Asia and Europe.

The conference will have the task of devising plans to ensure countries share expertise and information, including intelligence on known or suspected paedophiles. A Foreign Office source said: "We are likely to

see British authorities contacting police in Bangkok or Manila saying 'Paedophile X is arriving on such a flight from London at such a time'."

Mr Cook's announcement comes on the eve of a summit, the Asia-Europe Meeting, involving all 15 European Union members and 10 Far Eastern countries. The growth of sex tourism will top the agenda.

The Foreign Secretary first signalled Britain's plans to lead a crusade against child sex tourism during a mission last August to the Philippines, where up to 40,000 children are involved in prostitution in Manila alone.

An agreement between the two countries, the first of its kind in the world, paved the way for greater co-operation between British and Filipino police to crack down on the trade. The pact won only a guarded welcome from children's charities and field workers, who claimed the measures would have to be extended to all countries involved in the trade if the problem was not simply to move to other countries in South-east Asia and beyond.

Mr Cook believes the plans announced today respond to those calls. Britain will seek to spread good practice developed in the Philippines, where the Durham and Metropolitan police forces have already sent officers to train their counterparts in identifying and countering child prostitution and pornography.

The October conference is expected to recommend extending the police training programme to more countries. It will also recommend more sharing of expertise, using a new web-site.

The Foreign Office believes the emphasis on co-operation will counter criticism that Britain, with its ethical foreign policy, is lecturing other

Wealthy foreigners ask pimps in Asia to procure six-year-olds. Nick Cumming-Bruce on a sordid growth industry

NORBERT Voigt's proud boast, as he stood at the hotel window of a prospective client in the Thai beach resort of Pattaya, said it all. Pointing to some children playing outside he asked if the visitor liked kids like them.

They were a bit old, the visitor objected. "You like young children, really young children?" asked Voigt. "Whatever you want, I can get it for you."

By some accounts the trade is becoming more discreet, at any rate more careful and certainly more sophisticated. But no-one is under any illusion that the selling of children for sex

pany managers, lawyers, teachers, civil servants. Many communicated by letter, sometimes specifying the age they wanted. Voigt passed the orders on to local pimps, some of them teenage children, and took his cut from what was paid.

His boast to a television reporter posing as a customer and recording the encounter on a concealed camera helped secure his conviction in a Thai court and a seven-year jail sentence. German police, plundering his contact book, arrested another 25 people in Germany. But there are countless more where Voigt and his clients came from.

Gone perhaps are the days of the uninhibited child prostitution that thrived on Pattaya's beaches by day and in its bars by night under municipal bosses hungry for tourist dollars. But Voigt's case shattered claims of a clean

and endorsed press accounts of a flourishing trade in children.

By some accounts Asia's financial crisis of the past nine months has driven more women into prostitution and led more parents to sell their children to pimps. There is a burgeoning international traffic through Thailand of young girls and women lured, sometimes kidnapped, from Burma, Laos, southern China and Cambodia, destined for brothels in Japan and elsewhere.

In Thailand, at least, a fightback is gathering momentum. Recent legislation shifted the burden of punishment from prostitutes to organisers and clients, with stiffer penalties for those dealing with younger prostitutes. Draft legislation will give better protection to child witnesses in abuse cases and allow videotaped evidence.

Attitudes to foreign abusers are also changing. "A few years ago very few foreigners, perhaps even none, were convicted," said an experienced Thai prosecutor. Even now, some escape prosecution by skipping bail and leaving the country. Voigt's conviction shows that the old deference is dead.

Not so in the Philippines, where hopes of tougher action by the authorities had been raised by the 16-year jail term imposed on British tour operator Michael Clarke, who reportedly said he could supply children for the price of a hamburger.

These hopes have stalled, like a number of pending cases, for many old reasons: child witnesses disappear as the case comes to trial, offenders jump bail and, for no obvious reason except bribery, cases are suddenly dropped.

Trading partners

THAILAND: there may be as many as 400,000 children aged under 16 working in brothels, bars and clubs. Many are reportedly trafficked from northern rural areas, where incomes are much lower than the national average, or from nearby countries including Burma and Laos.

PHILIPPINES: up to 40,000 children involved in prostitution in Manila, and some 25,000 children in tourist areas and towns near Olongapo, the site of a recently-closed United States military base. Research shows that poverty forces girls into prostitution in a country where about half the urban population lives below the poverty line.

INDIA: 300,000 to 400,000 children involved in prostitution. Criminal gangs lure or abduct children, and thousands of girls enter prostitution as part of customary practices now banned by law. Girls from Bangladesh and Nepal are also sold for prostitution in India.

SRI LANKA: more than 10,000 boys may be involved in sex tourism. Large numbers of girls may also be involved in prostitution in the country's free trade zone.

LATIN AMERICA: child prostitution, linked to poverty, the plight of street children, drugs and sex tourism, exists in virtually all countries. Many of Brazil's 500,000 street children turn to prostitution for survival. There are also reports of thousands of girls forced into prostitution in mining camps in the Amazon region.

IN INDUSTRIALISED countries: poverty, disintegration of families, drug abuse and greater mobility of population have contributed to greater levels of child prostitution. The use of new technologies such as computer networks and video recorders makes it easier for criminals to involve children in pornography with less risk of detection. In the United States alone, up to 300,000 under-18s are estimated to be involved in prostitution.

A study of 160 foreigners in Asia whose convictions were made public in the three years up to 1997 showed that Britain had the fourth largest number of offenders out of 16 Western countries.

Robin Cook, page 8

Young girls dance at a bar in the red-light district of Bangkok, one of the favourite haunts of Western sex tourists

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID BROWNE

Mandelson plan to make Opposition more 'helpful'

Political staff

THE Minister Without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, is understood to be implementing a system of vetting speeches made by members of the Shadow Cabinet before they are delivered. Talks are going on between Downing Street and William Hague's office to sort out the practicalities of the scheme.

The move follows a succession of incidents in the 11 months since the election in which the Opposition's attitude was considered "unhelpful" by the Prime Minister and his office.

Some leading Tories are believed to oppose the scheme, on the basis that it extends Government interference into an area previously considered relatively free of it.

Others, however, think it could assist them, in that Mr Mandelson will be able to correct their errors of fact and interpretation.

Michael Howard, the shadow foreign secretary, has told Mr Hague that the idea should have been introduced while the Conservatives were in power, and that it ought to

be widened to include all speeches made by MPs and parliamentary candidates. The Government is against this on grounds of cost. It is thought Mr Mandelson will have to hire three new staff members to sift through speeches by shadow ministers alone.

However, Mr Mandelson is studying the possibility that the vetting system would be used more extensively in four core areas — foreign affairs, the security services, defence and the Millennium Dome.

He has been very upset by what he considers ill-founded criticism of the dome project and is anxious that, in future, all critics should be given the opportunity to put forward positive, well-informed points of view as well.

It is not clear what sanctions might be used against shadow ministers who ignore Government advice, but Mr Hague may be forced to agree to sack persistent offenders.

"Obviously, we are not going to tell the Opposition exactly what they can and can't say," said a source close to Mr Mandelson. "But we do feel that we can help make their opinions better informed."

Other areas considered for

reform but so far rejected include Millbank control over the Conservatives' luncheon engagements. Mr Mandelson was keen to take over this area, but backed off after unexpected opposition from the head waiters of restaurants near Westminster, who feared this would lead to confusion over bookings.

Some ministers are believed to be sceptical about the whole new system. "The Tories are so useless that the only way we could make them better informed would be to write their speeches for them," said one.

Mr Blair is understood to have come down against this idea, but has told colleagues he wants the Opposition to become more constructive.

"It's all very well Hague getting up and attacking Gordon after the Budget," he was quoted as saying. "But it's very unfair on Gordon, who had been working very hard for weeks."

Mr Blair added: "And it's not right for the new Britain. An opposition leader who wanted to be constructive should say 'Hey, that's good! But here's one or two ways you could make it even better.'"

Nine officers suspended at 'brutal' jail

continued from page 1

Two inmates who had made allegations were moved out of the jail under armed guard last week for their own protection amid claims of renewed intimidation by prison officers.

Most of the prisoners who allege they were beaten are black and the dossier includes claims that one man was forced to eat a "Black is Beautiful" poster which had been ripped from his cell wall.

Last night the Prison Service's Director of Security, Tony Pearson, said an internal inquiry had been able to identify most of the prisoners who alleged mistreatment.

"There are very serious questions to be answered in five cases which the police should investigate. We have asked the police to do so. We are unable to decide our response on two other allegations as the complainants remain anonymous."

Immediate changes were being made by the Scrubs' new governor, Stephen Moore, who started work on Monday, "to strengthen the management and supervision within the prison".

Daniel Machover, of Hickman Rose, welcomed the announcement and said he hoped the police would take statements from 20 victims

and witnesses who had so far come forward with evidence. He said the dossier indicated that some of the eight officers had been involved in repeated incidents and also implicated at least four more prison officers.

"We want to assist the police investigation as best we can and we hope it will now proceed speedily," said Mr Machover.

He added that renewed allegations had been made of intimidation of inmates in an attempt to prevent them co-operating with the official inquiries.

Nick Flynn, of the Prison Reform Trust, who first raised the allegations with

the governor of Wormwood Scrubs at the end of last year, said the decision to suspend the officers was correct but should have been made earlier when the internal inquiry was set up. "Wormwood Scrubs has found it very difficult to function while this cloud of suspicion has hung over the officers who work there."

"This is certainly the most serious investigation of its kind. None of the safeguards, the watchdogs or monitoring systems seem to have worked. They appear to have fallen into disuse at Wormwood Scrubs."

"It also raises questions about whether these prisoners were wandering around the landings with visible bruises without anybody being able to do anything about it."

The Prison Officers' Association, which 10 days ago staged a walkout in protest at the way the way to go to work had been handled, said last night it would co-operate with the police.

"We have made it clear before that we believe the best place to go for these allegations to be investigated is the police. What is not clear is why it has taken 10 days for the investigation to start," said Mark Head, the POA's national chairman.



Wormwood Scrubs, where prisoners allege systematic brutality

PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

Euston's
new 12 acre
umbrella

177
stations have now
been regenerated by
RAILTRACK
The heart of the railway

Euston station's vast roof is one of many being replaced to provide even more protection from the elements.

Arsenic murder appeal



Free Zoorah Shah demonstrators at the High Court yesterday at the start of her appeal against conviction for the murder of a man who allegedly forced her into sex. PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES HORTON

'Abuse drove woman to kill'

Fears for her children made woman stay silent, court hears

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

A WOMAN convicted of a murder five years ago yesterday told the Court of Appeal that she had been the victim of repeated sexual and physical abuse at the hands of the man she killed. She had not spoken out before because of her shame and her fear that revenge would be taken against her children.

Zoorah Shah, in her mid-40s, from Bradford, is appealing against her conviction for the murder of Mohamed Azam, aged 47, a drugs dealer and businessman who, she said, had used her as his mistress in exchange for finding her a home. She was jailed for life at Leeds Crown Court in 1993 with a recommendation that she serve a minimum of 20 years.

Born in Mirpur in Pakistan, Zoorah Shah had come to Bradford for an arranged marriage in the 1970s but her husband had left her when she was pregnant with her third child. Azam had offered to find her a home in exchange for sex.

Speaking through an interpreter, she told her counsel, Edward Fitzgerald QC, that Azam had forced her to have sex with him. "He said if you have sex with me, I'll help you out," she said.

Throughout their relationship, she said, Azam had insisted on sex with her and had also been physically violent to her. In 1992, when she visited her family in Pakistan, he had told her to bring drugs back with her. He was furious when she did not do so.

"He used to hit me, he used to pull my hair," she told Lord Justice Kennedy, sitting with Mr Justice Butterfield and Mr Justice Richards. "I was very frightened of him. I didn't say anything to anybody. It was my own insult."

Azam had been jailed for drugs offences in 1994 but when he came out of prison in 1995 the abuse continued. He had forced her to have sex in the graveyard where two of her children were buried, she said. She had gone to see his brother, Sher Azam, a leading figure in the Bradford Muslim community, but he had been unable to help.

On one occasion, Mohamed Azam had forced her to have sex in a car while another

man watched. She had been very ashamed. When he started to make suggestive remarks about her daughters, she decided to take action, she said.

She had acquired neela (arsenic) in Pakistan which she had originally put in a samosa because she had been told it affected a man's sexual drive.

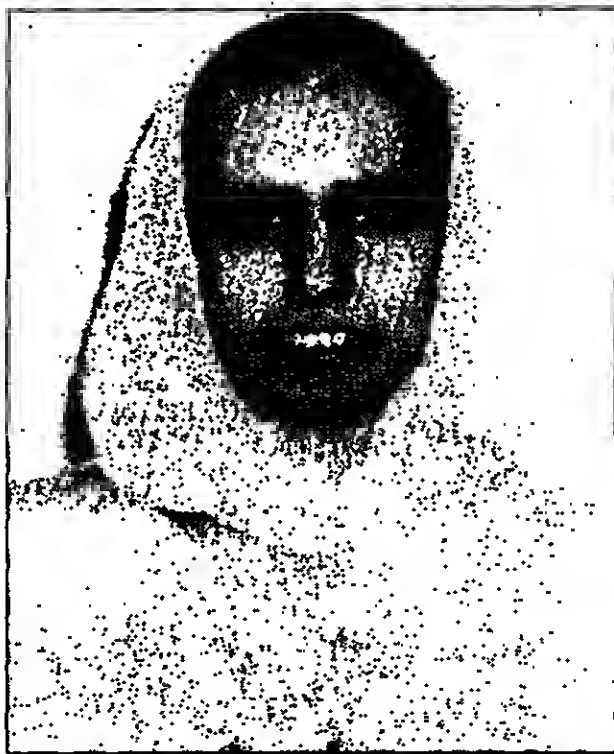
"He was very ill, he wasn't able to have sex for some time," she said. "He wasn't able to do it so he started hitting me. He kicked me in my stomach so I had an infection. I was a mess, nothing more."

He recovered and she considered taking the poison herself but thought that there was no one else to look after her two daughters and son. She decided to put some more arsenic in a *gajrella* (a sweet) and give it to Azam, knowing that it could be fatal.

"On that day I made my mind up. I was going to poison anyone who came near me," she said. She gave him the sweet at a family gathering. The next day, he died.

She admitted she had lied to the police when they interviewed her after the killing. "How could I hold the Koran and lie?" she asked Mr Fitzgerald. "Once you've touched the Koran you can't lie."

Earlier Mr Fitzgerald had said that fresh evidence about Mrs Shah's mental state at



"I was very frightened of him. I didn't say anything to anybody. It was my own insult"

Zoorah Shah

have meant lying on oath. "How could I hold the Koran and lie?" she asked Mr Fitzgerald. "Once you've touched the Koran you can't lie."

Earlier Mr Fitzgerald had said that fresh evidence about Mrs Shah's mental state at

the time had emerged. It showed that she was suffering from diminished responsibility on account of a serious depressive illness.

Evidence of the cultural background of women in her position would also explain

her behaviour, Mr Fitzgerald said. "The final issue is whether, in the light of the new evidence, it can be said that it is still a case of murder and not a case of manslaughter."

The hearing continues.

Driver on death charge 'frustrated by slow car'

Amelia Genterman

A RALLY driver accused of killing a young couple by shunting them

into the path of an oncoming car said he had not meant to hurt them, although he felt "blissed out" because their car was travelling slowly in the fast lane, an Old Bailey jury

heard yesterday. Jason Humble told police that he had left frustrated by the driver of a black Fiesta who was going at about 35 mph on a dual carriageway and was "deliberately" preventing him from passing. "I hoped he would turn left or right and he would get out of my life."

Toby Exley, 22, and his girlfriend, Karen Martin, 20, died instantly from multiple injuries when their car smashed through the central reservation of the A316 in Hanworth, west London, hitting an on-

coming car, on October 6 last year. Humble, a rally competitor who described himself as "the best driver ever", allegedly told police that Mr Exley was showing off and was just a "wind-up person" who was "obviously trying to hold me up" by driving slowly.

"I sat behind him at a safe distance and flashed him, but he ignored me. I came up fairly close. I just wanted him to see I was there. Then he slammed his brakes on." The car wheeled around and went

straight through the reservation. "I did not feel responsible, but if I had not been there, it would not have happened."

He denies the manslaughter of the couple and causing death by dangerous driving, and has rejected allegations that he nudged the Fiesta three times. He told police: "It did annoy me, but I did not ram him or anything."

Denying police suggestions that there was an element of malice in the way he had been driving, he said there was

only a "very minute possibility" he could have touched the car at all. "The whole thing was a complete nightmare — I am full of remorse obviously."

Humble, unemployed from Farnborough, Hampshire, said he had been too scared to stop or talk to police and had driven straight home where he "probably went to bed and cried". He discovered what had happened when he read the local paper a few days later.

The trial continues today.

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BRISTOL & WEST INTERNATIONAL

Clash with press at Yates christening

Stuart Miller

SHE had planned it down to the smallest detail to avoid press attention, but yesterday Paula Yates found the christening of her daughter overshadowed by another clash with the media.

Guests were arriving at St Peter's Church in the east Sydney suburb of Watson's Bay for the christening of Heavenly Hiraani Tiger Lily — her daughter by INXS singer Michael Hutchence — when an Australian newspaper photographer was allegedly attacked by a minder.

Brendan Esposito, a photographer with the Daily Telegraph, a Sydney tabloid, claims he was pushed off a wall by a security guard, injuring his back and striking his head.

He was taken by ambulance to St Vincent's hospital, and was later discharged in a wheelchair, with cuts, bruises and strained muscles.

"He was just doing his job and he was pushed off a wall," said Col Allen, the paper's editor. "We have made a complaint and the police are investigating."

The paper has passed a photograph of the alleged assailant to the police.

On Thursday, Ms Yates

allegedly lashed out at a photographer after she visited the hotel where Hutchence committed suicide in November.

Yesterday's 40-minute service was planned as a tribute to Hutchence, and Ms Yates had tried to keep it secret. Tiger Lily was whisked into the church by a friend, shielded by security guards. Ms Yates arrived shortly afterwards, in dark glasses and a veil.

The trial continues today.

Recovered memory therapy is 'useless'

Rory Carroll

A DAMNING report on the so-called false memory syndrome yesterday opened the floodgates to litigation, and exposed the tensions existing between mental health practitioners.

Psychiatrists and counsellors are split over whether or not they will defy new guidelines which say recovered memory is a dangerous myth that destroys lives.

Campaigners against sex abuse have admitted defeat and say sympathetic therapists are refusing to treat patients in case they are sued. But some therapists are determined to go on using the discredited techniques, such as hypnotherapy and regression, insisting these can uncover repressed memories.

The methods were denounced in the British Journal of Psychiatry report, which said recovered memories were almost certainly false and often planted by the therapist.

Sydney Brandon, who chaired the report's four-person team, said: "It is a useless, trendy therapy from the United States. It simply doesn't work. There isn't a single corroborated case. People are having these ideas put into their heads which then cause untold chaos in their lives."

Judy Ryde, chairman of Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility, said members would not be browbeaten into abandoning a valuable technique. "There is an enormous amount of hugely damaging sexual abuse and people do repress it."

In the US, where at least 12 psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and counsellors are being sued at the moment, damages in legal cases have totalled millions of dollars. Yesterday's report could trigger further professional negligence cases at the civil courts, where recovered memory practitioners will have greater difficulty passing the Bolam test. The test

requires that a reasonable body of opinion agrees with the disputed technique.

Allan Levy, QC, said: "I suspect there will be quite an outbreak of cases, and not just from the patients. Third parties, like parents who were accused of abuse, could also take [civil] action."

The General Medical Council will not confirm complaints until they reach the public hearing of the professional conduct committee, which could take several months.

An estimated thousand families have been affected by recovered memory practice, said Ann Casement, chairman of the UK Council for Psychotherapy. "Psychotherapists in the UK could put themselves at risk, but we are trying not to let [litigation] cross the Atlantic."

Criminal indictments were brought against five Texas mental health workers last October for fraud related to memory recovery techniques.

An Illinois woman who sought treatment for depression and was diagnosed as suffering trauma because of childhood ritual abuse that included cannibalism, was awarded \$10.6 million (\$24.4 million). Settlements frequently exceed \$1 million.

Professor Brandon said that 30 cases randomly selected from 670 claims — submitted to a Washington victim compensation programme — 26 had allegedly recovered a false memory of abuse. After treatment, 20 were suicidal, 11 needed hospital inpatient treatment, eight mutilated themselves and all of their marriages had ended.

But Alec McGuire, chairman of the British Association for Counselling, said the findings were unrepresentative. "Brandon's report falls to one end of the spectrum. It does not express the consensus of the professions."

The Royal College of Psychiatrists commissioned the report in 1996 but refused to publish it because the findings split its members. The college published its guidelines last November.

Blair and Ahern push to meet April deadline

John Wiffin
Ireland Correspondent

TONY Blair and Bertie Ahern, the Irish prime minister, will have "substantial" talks in Downing Street tonight after disagreements between participants in multi-party negotiations on Northern Ireland's future.

The Alliance Party criticised as "dumb and ridiculous" a plan from the Ulster Unionists for a Northern Ireland assembly to embrace a committee-style of government similar to a local authority.

The plan would mean a move away from power-sharing, and was described as unacceptable by the SDLP, John Hume, the SDLP leader, said: "It would deepen division."

The Ulster Unionists also said that draft amendments to the Irish Republic's constitution, essential to securing consent to a deal, retain the republic's territorial claim to Northern Ireland and so were unacceptable. The amendments, to articles two and three of the constitution, have been re-drafted almost 30 times.

The British and Irish governments are intent on taking the lead in the battle to find a settlement before April 8, the deadline imposed by the chairman of the talks, George Mitchell. It is expected he will shortly forward a paper outlining his best guess of a possible deal, perhaps on Friday.

It will draw on the governments' position and represent a blueprint towards a settlement.

Mr Blair spoke yesterday on the telephone to Mr Mitchell, a former United States senator. He also called Lord Alderdice, leader of the All-

ance Party, and Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin president, speaking to each for 15 minutes. He is expected to speak to the two loyalist fringe leaders today, Gary McKinnel of the Ulster Democratic Party, and David Ervine, of the Progressive Unionist Party.

Mr Blair last night met Mr Hume at Downing Street. He has seen David Trimble, Ulster Unionist leader, four times in a week. There is now little doubt that Mr Blair and Mr Ahern will be at Stormont next week.

Yesterday's difficulties were unexpected. Most pundits believe that a deal on cross-border bodies is the main stumbling block. All parties, except Sinn Féin, agree there should be an elected body. But the deep divisions on how it should be run, and what its powers should be, only enforced yesterday.

The Ulster Unionists want the assembly to be run rather like Belfast city council. Chairs of committees would be awarded to parties on the basis of their proportion of the vote in assembly elections. There would be no executive.

The SDLP, the other key player, says that a committee-style system would give overwhelming power to Unionists, believing that the non-Unionist chairmen would be overruled in committees that would have an inbuilt Unionist majority.

The SDLP — and other talks participants agree — is pushing for a power-sharing executive which would mean Democratic Unionists and Sinn Féin serving in a cabinet. The SDLP also wants a sufficiency of consensus rule, meaning each community would have a veto over the other.

"I wanted everyone to look at me," he says, with a small, only half ironic smile. "I wanted to be loved by millions of people, the same as every other actor and if they tell you they want something else they're full of shit."

Kevin Bacon on the truth about Hollywood egos

Arts, G2 page 8

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Stansted plane crash

Crash landing

Emerald Airways HS748 takes off at 12.20am with 40 passengers and four crew on board including 18 Leeds United players and staff.

Flames and petrol start pouring out of the right hand engine. The pilot decides to abort.

The plane overshoots the runway and crash lands collapsing the nose gear.

Everyone safely evacuates the aircraft within 30 seconds.

The narrowest of escapes and a chilling reminder of Busby Babes tragedy

Martin Wainwright

FANS, fiancées and the players themselves shared the same chilling thought yesterday as the narrowness of Leeds United's escape from disaster became clear.

A few moments more and the 1958 Munich tragedy of Manchester United's "Busby Babes" could have been repeated at Stansted.

"Munich is something that will be on people's minds today," said the Leeds chairman, Peter Ridsdale, who jumped from the burning plane with his son Matthew, 13. As he helped rally the team in the airport terminal, the first calls from horrified relatives were coming through.

Robert Molenaar's fiancée, Karin, who will marry the Dutch defender in Holland this summer, said: "There could have been no wedding — nothing."

Molenaar described how passengers felt the heat of the engine fire "which became really big — that was scary".

Leeds assistant manager David O'Leary was praised by the 40 passengers on board the British Aerospace 748 for calmly leading the way to an emergency exit. He injured his shoulder when he barged the door



Robert Molenaar — felt heat of engine fire

open. Leeds Norwegian star Gunnar Halle said: "The crew were superb as well. The pilot was really magnificent — he got us down from about 150ft really quickly. It's because of his actions that we are okay."

"There was a bit of shouting when people saw the flames from the engine. I thought there was going to be an explosion because of all the fuel on board. We just waited for the bang as we came down."

Most of the team headed straight for their cars after two coaches ferried them back to Leeds United's Elland Road ground early

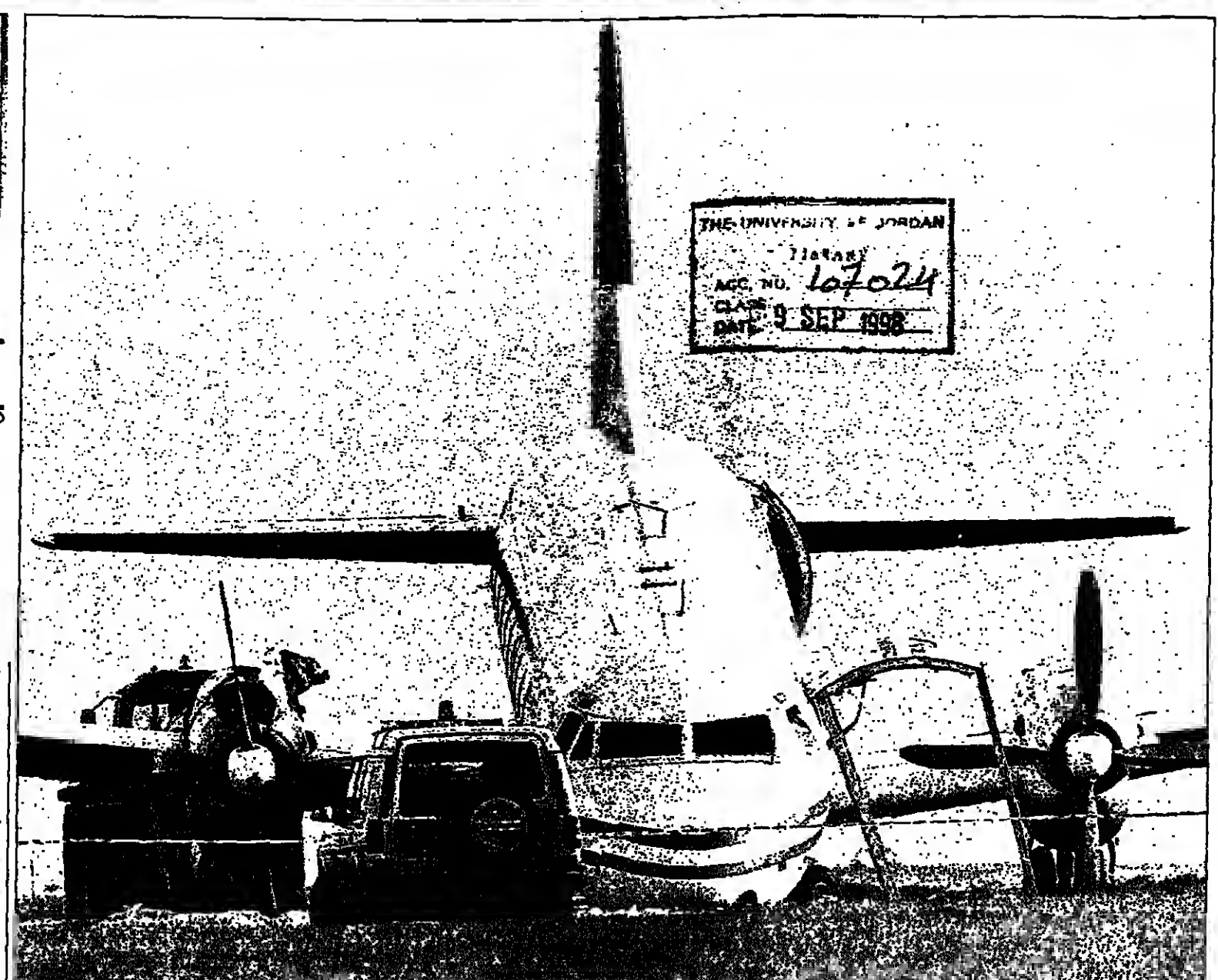
yesterday. All looked strained.

A fan, John Kennedy, 44, a businessman who was a corporate guest at the West Ham match, said: "I had a seat next to the engine and saw flames shoot out. It was all over in about 12 seconds. The most terrifying part was jumping out of the back of the plane into the dark. We wouldn't be here if we'd gone up much higher, though, and that's a fact."

Andrew Rafter, 34, another guest of the club on the Emerald Airlines charter flight, said: "We had just taken off when we saw that flames had engulfed the top of the wing. We thought the plane was going to blow up."

Mr O'Leary said: "We'd gone up a bit when all at once it was like a rollercoaster. The captain said that if we'd been a bit further up, there would have been a really big explosion."

Mr Ridsdale, who said that the club's travel plans would not be altered, ruefully compared the near-disaster to Leeds's 3-0 defeat — the season's heaviest for the team — at West Ham. He said: "One of the players told me: 'We've had a hell of a result tonight' — and he wasn't talking about Upton Park."



The Emerald Airways BAe 748 with its nose buried after crashing with the Leeds United football team on board

PHOTOGRAPH: RUSSELL BOYCE

Snap decision averted disaster

Keith Harper Transport Editor

A SUDDEN fire and explosion in the turbine seconds after take-off was given as the main reason for the crash of a twin-engine aircraft carrying the Leeds United football team at Stansted airport in Essex on Monday night.

British Aerospace 748 — and the length of the runway helped avert disaster.

The 40 passengers, returning from a Premiership match against West Ham, and the four crew, escaped with minor injuries.

If the pilot, Captain John Hackett, had been operating a larger aircraft, he would not have been able to abort the take-off. But at a height of 150ft, he was able to crash-land the plane before it reached the end of the runway.

The plane, owned by Emerald Airways, a Liverpool-based charter company, was examined before it left Leeds Bradford airport, and again before it was due to leave Stansted, but no mechanical faults were found.

The company's operations director, Mick O'Brien, said that Captain Hackett had performed an exceptional piece of flying in landing safely. From take-off to landing, the incident lasted a minute. The nose of the plane was

buried in the earth. Passengers escaped within seconds through the plane's doors.

Firefighters said the undercarriage was embedded in the soil. The starboard engine and propeller were severely damaged and badly charred. The propeller on the port engine was bent and buckled where it hit the ground.

Airport duty manager Melvyn Seymour said: "From the moment of the explosion in the starboard engine to bringing the plane to a safe halt

was a matter of seconds. It was a snap decision to come round and try to land, and it was the right decision."

Mr Seymour added: "There is not enough praise you can give Captain Hackett. If he had not done what he did, he would have had the whole plane in flames."

Mr O'Brien said Captain Hackett was "pretty shaken". The Civil Aviation Authority said that the plane was 16 years old and had completed 17,200 flying hours.

d Aher meet adline

Debris from 20 years of dumping in 65 metre shaft to be dug out over 18 years

£355m bill for nuclear waste clean up

Paul Brown Environment Correspondent

RADIOACTIVE waste is to be excavated from a shaft at Dounreay in Caithness over the next 18 years at a cost of up to £355 million, the Government announced yesterday.

The 65-metre water-filled shaft had a mixture of the most dangerous and volatile substances known to man thrown into it over a period of 20 years.

Each piece of debris will have to be removed by a special giant robot which has yet to be developed.

A second but shallower silo nearby is still being used and will also have to be dug out. The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has ordered the UK Atomic Energy Authority to stop using it by the end of the year and find an alternative.

The original dump will have to be isolated from the surrounding rock.

This will be done by boring holes around the shaft, either by freezing the rock solid so that water can no longer flow into the shaft or using grouting.

Once the shaft is sealed off from its surroundings the radioactive water will be pumped out and the waste removed, checked for its contents and then encased in concrete for storage — process which will take years.

A full inventory of what is in the shaft was never kept by the authority so the exact amounts of plutonium and uranium in the dump are not known.

In theory the authority admitted yesterday there is enough fissile material to cause a "criticality accident" where the material starts an uncontrolled nuclear reaction — but the authority thought this unlikely.

Sandy McWhirter, the technical manager, said the possibility would be guarded against at all times.

Another problem is the possibility of sodium and potassium from the fast breeder reactor programme remaining in the shaft.

It was a reaction with this material that blew the concrete plug off the mouth of the shaft in 1977, showering the area with radioactive material.

The resulting damage and danger were kept secret at the time, and have only recently become known.

There is still no explanation of hotspots discovered at the base of the shaft nearest to the point where the bottom of the shaft is located. One of the reasons for digging it out is the fear that the sea will erode the cliffs and wash the contents into the sea.

John McEwan, the chief executive of UKAEA, said yesterday: "The particles on the beach are the same type as those disposed of in the shaft, but we have not discovered how they could have got from the shaft through the rock to the beach."

"We have not found any other explanation either so we are still looking."

Mr McEwan emphasised that while the Dounreay dump would not be acceptable today it had been licensed as a dump by government inspectors at the time and "at no time did the UKAEA break the law."

There is estimated to be 700 cubic metres of radioactive contaminated material in the shaft.

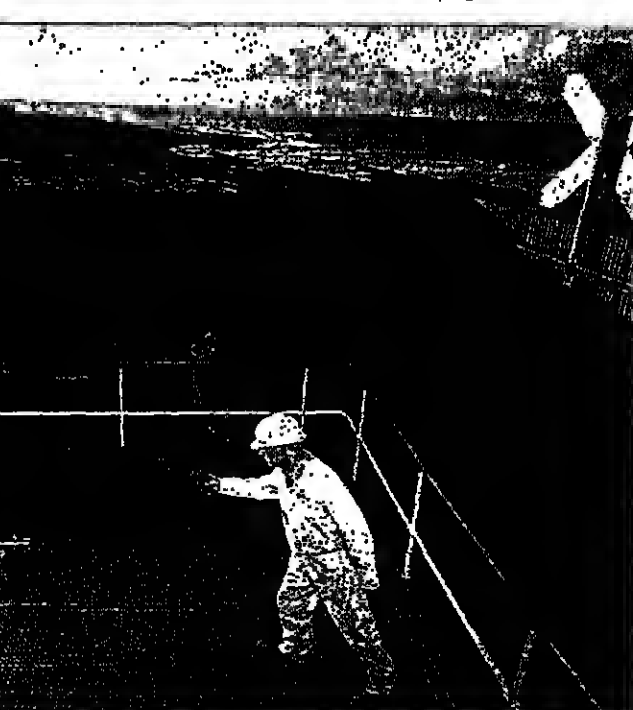
They range from plutonium contaminated tissues in plastic bags to fuel pins for fast breeder reactors and whole industrial lathes that were thrown down the shaft.

The decision to get rid of the WE-177s, introduced in 1966, was taken by the Conservative government, which set the end of this year as a deadline.

Mr Robertson last night placed new emphasis on what he called "conflict prevention".

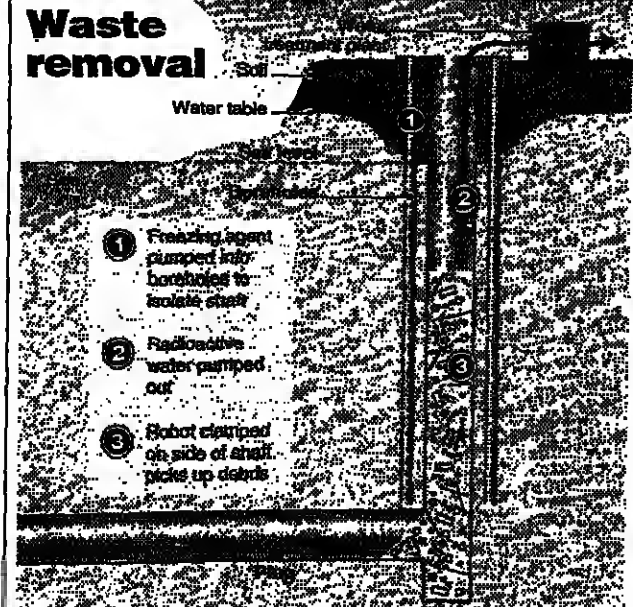
Giving the annual Winston Churchill memorial lecture in Luxembourg, he said he wanted to develop a new role for the armed forces as "worldwide ambassadors ... building bridges between former adversaries".

He proposed a "defence diplomacy action plan", including exchange and training programmes and English language training for foreign military forces.



The lid on the intermediate waste shaft at Dounreay. Its contents are to be extracted and encased in concrete

PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MCELROY



Waste removal process: 1. Freezing agent pumped into shaft. 2. Radioactive water pumped out. 3. Robot cleaned up debris.

Euro-eyebrows raised at Britain's early boast

Stephen Bates in Brussels and Michael White

THE Government yesterday took the rare step of announcing a 45-point list of its achievements during the British EU presidency.

It is true, however, that there have been compliments for British ministers over their chairing of meetings and the transformation in the British attitude to the EU since the general election.

Mr Cook, Foreign Secretary, yesterday claimed that his French opposite number called the British presidency "dynamique, drôle et efficace" — "the highest words of praise in the French language".

Mr Cook remarked, apparently tongue in cheek, that the British presidency was "giving out a message that the EU is not something being done to us but something we are part of and can contribute to."

Among the achievements has been the little-sung management of the reform of research funding, the third biggest EU expenditure. But the 45 points include many who could plausibly be described as carrying forward work already in progress.

One European diplomat said: "Broadly they have done a good job so far — especially Robin Cook — but it is premature to be drawing up lists of

achievement. It misses the point, and it may backfire against perceptions of how the British have really done."

The Government's list includes record seizures of cocaine and cannabis on the Continent, as a result of "better co-operation between ... customs authorities". Also listed is publication of the European Commission and European Monetary Institute reports on the single currency, and the "flying start" to EU enlargement, both events long scheduled.

While ministers can claim credit for progress towards agreement on a ban on fishcake, the assertion that "good progress" was made on measures to improve "zoo" role in conservation is questionable. Environment ministers made little headway on the issue last week.

It was unfortunate that the report should list reform of the Common Agriculture Policy (itself a commission proposal) on the day farm ministers meeting in Brussels virtually unanimously condemned the plans as — in the words of Ireland's minister, Joe Walsh — "unacceptable, incomprehensible and extraordinary".

The Italians protested that the plans laid too much emphasis on the environment. At least one British priority still has some way to go.

Fast-food snack stops singer's Cambridge gig

Stuart Miller

MORE than 1,800 fans of singer Finlay Quaye awaited his arrival at a Cambridge concert in vain — he had been arrested trying to grab a bite to eat at King's Cross while waiting to get off from London.

Although Quaye was named as best British male solo artist at the Brit awards, and has sold nearly 600,000 copies of his debut album, Maverick A Strike, he found himself suspected of credit card fraud at the station on Monday evening.

Buying a snack at a fast-food outlet, he first tried to pay with one card, which was

rejected. He produced another — but the takesway manager, already suspicious, noticed it had not been signed.

The manager called the British Transport police, and officers stopped Quaye on the platform minutes before he was due to get on the train.

He insisted the card was his, but was taken to a nearby office so checks could be made by phone. He was released 15 minutes later without charge when it became clear he was telling the truth — but by then it was too late to catch the train for Cambridge.

Fans had paid £9.50 for tickets at Cambridge's Corn Exchange. The concert has been rearranged for April 24.



Finlay Quaye: 'pretty upset about the whole thing'

RAF to dismantle its atomic warheads

Richard Norton-Taylor

THE RAF yesterday shed its remaining arsenal of nuclear bombs, leaving the Royal Navy the sole possessor of nuclear weapons.

The largely symbolic decision was taken by the Government amid reports that George Robertson, Defence

Secretary, has agreed to relax the alert status of the Trident nuclear missile system, abandoning a 30-year tradition.

Successive governments have maintained that there must always be one Trident or its predecessor, Polaris — submarine on 24-hour patrol.

The RAF will no longer possess WE-177 bombs for Fornado aircraft, a relic of the cold war.

The Ministry of Defence yesterday would not say how many bombs were involved. The nuclear warheads will be dismantled at the atomic research centre at Burghfield, Berkshire, though it remains unclear how the plutonium will be disposed of.

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He proposed a "defence diplomacy action plan", including exchange and training programmes and English language training for foreign military forces.

Health cover up a day. 00 77 89 55

News in brief

Shevardnadze foe is shot dead

GEORGIA'S security forces yesterday shot dead a militant who recently kidnapped several United Nations soldiers and was also suspected of an attack on the president, Eduard Shevardnadze. Gocha Esubua died in a shoot-out after security forces surrounded a house in the western town of Zugdidi, said a spokesman for the security ministry. Eight other suspects were detained.

Esubua, a supporter of the late Georgian leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was suspected of involvement in an assassination attempt in February against Mr Shevardnadze. Eleven days later, his gang took four UN soldiers hostage in Zugdidi and demanded the release of colleagues who were arrested in connection with the attack on Mr Shevardnadze. — AP, Tbilisi.

Monster cartoon back on TV

POCKET Monsters, an action-packed television cartoon that kept millions of Japanese children glued to their sets on Tuesday evenings, is returning after being taken off the air in December when an episode gave hundreds of children convulsions. TV Tokyo is bringing back the series, also known as Pokenon, on April 16 in a toned-down version of the show.

Nintendo has said the cartoon will be broadcast in the United States from September. — AP, Tokyo and Osaka.

Germany to see Russian files

RUSSIA'S intelligence service is to give Germany its archives on the fate of about 300,000 Germans punished in the Soviet Union during and after the second world war, the Interfax news agency reported yesterday.

Oleg Osobkov, the deputy chief of the Federal Security Service — the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB — and Manfred Blume, general director of the German Red Cross's search service, signed an agreement yesterday on transferring the information. — AP, Moscow.

180 Somalis 'drowned'

SOME 180 Somalis apparently fleeing economic problems in their home country are believed to have drowned off Yemen at the weekend, the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR said yesterday. A spokeswoman, Judith Kumin, said two survivors picked up by a passing vessel and taken to Yemen had reported the incident. They told the UNHCR that they had left the northern Somali port of Bosaso on a crowded vessel. The six-man crew, they said, had been picked up by another boat. — Reuters, Geneva.

Mandela meets investigators

PRESIDENT Nelson Mandela of South Africa is due today to meet members of a judicial team investigating an alleged coup plot before deciding his next step, his spokesman said.

Senior government and security sources say Mr Mandela does not believe that there was a plot to unseat him or his government, but has appointed the commission because he wants to know why a false report ended up on his desk.

A senior security official said the report given to Mr Mandela in February which alleged there was a conspiracy within the security forces to destabilise the country contained senior political and military names. — Reuters, Johannesburg.

Naked flaunting of law

A FEMALE driver wearing nothing but her seat belt was arrested after a high-speed chase with police in Indiana. She was taken to a hospital psychiatric ward. — AP, Michigan.

Book on Mishima banned

A BOOK which details the author's homosexual affair with the late Japanese novelist Yukio Mishima has been banned for breaking copyright laws, court officials and the publisher said yesterday. Copies of Yukio Mishima: The Sword and the Red Pigment of Winter must now be withdrawn from bookstores.

The book, about an affair between Mishima and Jiro Fukushima, drew the ire of the late novelist's children, who claimed the use of letters sent by Mishima to Fukushima in the book violated the copyright on his work. The court ruled on Monday that using the letters was illegal because neither Fukushima nor the publisher had permission to print them, even though Fukushima was the legal owner of the letters. — AP, Tokyo.

Hanoi catches its rats

VIETNAM'S campaign last month against its plague of rats has been a big success — more than 27 million rodents were killed. The newspaper Youth reported that the widespread use of traps and hunting dogs had been responsible. Vietnam is short of snakes and cats, the normal predators of rats, and more than 250,000 acres of rice fields have been damaged by the voracious rodents this year. Earlier this year, the government ordered restaurants serving cat and snake meat to close. — AP, Hanoi.

School victory for Albanians



Albanian students celebrate the opening of the Albanian Institute in Kosovo's capital, Pristina. The building was vacated by Kosovo Serbs to allow the Albanians to start a gradual return to the state education system under an agreement that is seen as key to defusing tension in the troubled province. PHOTOGRAPH: SAVA RADOVANOVIC

Student shot with father's gun

AN 18-YEAR-OLD student was seriously wounded at a school in northern France yesterday when he dared a classmate to fire his father's pistol at his head. The other student apparently believed the safety catch was on when he put the gun to Hassan Atrane's head and pulled the trigger.

Police in Tourcoing are investigating whether the shooting was an accident or a disguised suicide attempt. Mr Atrane had family problems and trouble with his girlfriend. — AP, Tourcoing.

I can't believe that cute blond-haired kid is going to get married. Well appearances are deceptive. They haven't named a date yet and he has been dying his hair blond.
Pass notes — Macaulay Culkin

G2 page 3

Merger threat to Cyprus

Chris Morris in Ankara

TURKEY and the Turkish Cypriots sent a warning shot across the European Union's bows yesterday promising to merge into a single state if they feel threatened by the progress of Greek Cypriot membership negotiations with the EU.

As the EU talks began in Brussels, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders held the first meeting of a new joint Association Council in Ankara. Sukru Sina Gurel, a Turkish spokesman, described the EU negotiations

As the Greek sector begins EU membership talks, Turkey reveals plans to form single state with the island's north

with Cyprus as a "historic mistake".

Taner Etkin, Turkish Cypriot minister in charge of foreign affairs, went further: "If our existence on the island comes under threat, we will not hesitate to unite completely with Turkey."

There has been talk of closer integration in recent months, but Mr Etkin's statement was perhaps the most blunt on the prospect of the division of Cyprus becoming permanent.

Ankara has already decided

to include Turkish Cypriots in its delegations at international meetings, and it has begun posting them to its embassies abroad.

Turkey hopes that political pressure will force the EU to suspend its talks with the Greek Cypriot government. Ankara was angry enough at being excluded from this stage of EU enlargement and the prospect of Greek Cypriot membership has added insult to injury.

The EU must now decide what to do next to solve this

problem of its own making. A proposal conveyed to the Turkish Cypriots by Britain last month, inviting them to join the Greek Cypriots in a joint delegation, was swiftly rejected.

The wily Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denkash, has made it clear that he will play no role in the negotiations unless the international community recognises the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

In the meantime, plans are being laid for even closer co-

operation with the Turkish mainland. They already share the same currency, and the same postal and telephone services.

In that respect, the threat of greater integration rings somewhat hollow because northern Cyprus is already totally dependent on Turkey, relying on considerable financial aid from Ankara, which has more than 30,000 troops stationed on the island.

Nevertheless, Cyprus still has the potential to derail the EU's enlargement plans. All

sides are warning of a dramatic escalation in tensions over the coming months.

Some form of compromise must be found before the intended delivery of S-300 anti-aircraft missiles by Russia to the Greek Cypriots later in the year. The Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, told the Greek defence minister yesterday that the missiles would be delivered on time, but Turkey has threatened to use force to prevent them being deployed.

International mediators are lining up, including the British representative, Sir David Hannay, and President Clinton's star negotiator, Richard Holbrooke.



Riot police on standby in a street in Seoul, yesterday, in case of violence during a demonstration by South Koreans protesting about the economic decline. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said yesterday that it was encouraged by South Korea's actions but warned that 1998 would be a tough year. PHOTOGRAPH: YUN SUK-BONG

China in human rights gesture as Zhu visits Britain

John Gittings and Ian Black

CHINESE diplomacy sought to defuse criticism of Beijing's human rights policies yesterday as the newly elected premier, Zhu Rongji, arrived in London for an Asian-European summit.

As Mr Zhu went to Windsor for a private audience with the Queen, Beijing confirmed that negotiations were under way with the United Nations human rights commissioner, Mary Robinson, for an unprecedented visit to China. Ms Robinson revealed in Geneva that it may include a trip to Tibet.

In another move which the European Union will see as justifying its softer approach to Beijing, Xu Shuliang, a veteran dissident previously jailed for 10 years, has been allowed to leave China.

Mr Zhu will have bilateral talks with Tony Blair and the European Commission president, Jacques Santer, in the first ever EU-China summit tomorrow before taking part in the Asia-Europe Meeting.

He is accompanied by the foreign minister, Tang Jiaxuan, and the foreign trade minister, Shi Guangsheng — both appointed by the Chinese parliament this month.

British officials say they are keen to develop a new relationship with China as a "friend and partner". Criticism of human rights and Hong Kong developments has been carefully muted.

"We are trying to develop a much broader relationship with China as it emerges as one of the great powers of the 21st century," a senior Foreign Office diplomat said. Ms Robinson's visit in September reflects a new Chinese willingness to discuss human rights — while continuing to insist they are a domestic matter. It was impor-

tant, she said yesterday, that China was now prepared to address the question "with reference to international standards and norms".

Tibet was one of several areas under discussion, including labour and women's rights, and rural poverty.

There is huge interest in Europe in how Mr Zhu will perform on his first overseas visit as premier. It is also the first Chinese visit to Britain at this level since 1985.

The EU has a vested interest in the economic stability of China, as both a lucrative market for European goods and a bulwark against the Asian financial crisis.

The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, has spoken positively of Mr Zhu's "bold statements about economic reform". Today he is to meet the governor of the Bank of England and the China-Britain Trade Group as well as Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher.

China is being urged to take ruthless action to privatise the state-owned sector. But Mr Zhu has shown caution over a step which would cause social unrest.

Mr Xu, who left for exile in the United States yesterday, was in the Democracy Wall movement of the early 1980s. After his release in 1991, the authorities made it impossible for him to find a job.

Earlier this year he and 16 other dissidents sent a petition to the Chinese parliament demanding the release of all political prisoners. Supporters in Hong Kong say he has been "forced to leave".

The most prominent Democracy Wall activist, Wei Jingsheng, was allowed to go abroad last November.

Meanwhile Liu Kangxi, the author of an unpublished manuscript calling for political reform, was arrested in southern China yesterday, supporters in Hong Kong said.

Disenchanted Ukraine lurches to the left in poll

James Meek in Moscow

THE Ukrainian president, Leonid Kuchma, insisted yesterday that he would continue market reforms despite a strong vote for Communists and their socialist allies in parliamentary elections which left them just short of an absolute majority.

One pro-government paper in Kiev headlined its report "Red Dawn" after the country's 38 million voters, oppressed by poverty, corruption and a wages crisis in which workers are owed \$2 billion in back-pay, gave the four leftwing parties an overall 42 per cent of the vote.

The lion's share, 26 per cent, went to the Communists, who oppose privatisation, the sale of land and Ukraine's increasingly close relationship with the West.

They believe in a planned economy, regret the break-up of the USSR and want closer ties with their fellow ex-Soviet East Slavs in neighbouring Russia and Belarus.

Despite the left's triumph, effectively a shout of anger from the electorate at the failure of seven years of half-hearted reform and economic decline under Mr Kuchma and his predecessor, Leonid Kravchuk, the president said there would be no return to Soviet economic methods.

Final results were not due until late last night but the Communists and two smaller socialist parties looked likely to pick up around 190 seats in the 450-seat legislature, the Verkhovna Rada.

Mr Kuchma's hopes of get-

ting any reformist legislation through the Rada rest on a wedge of smaller nationalist, pro-government and centrist parties and 114 non-aligned "independents", many of whom are businessmen.

Petro Symonenko, the Communist leader, said he wanted radical changes to Ukraine's new constitution, to abolish the presidency and to let the biggest party in parliament form the government. He

called for "rapprochement" with Russia and Belarus.

His success was welcomed by Russian Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, who dreams of reuniting the East Slavs as a prelude to recreating the Soviet Union. "In Russia, people are increasingly disappointed in democratic parties. The same process is under way in Ukraine," he said.

The election was a disaster for Ukrainian nationalists.

Millions of Ukrainians died as a result of the Russian civil war, forced collectivisation and state-inspired famine. Yet the left's electorate today sees in the Communists not the Bolshevik ideology of Lenin's time or Stalin's butchers but the meagre certainties of the three decades when the USSR was ruled by Ukrainians: Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev.

Mr Kuchma, a former missile factory boss from Breshneva's home town of Dnepropetrovsk, has won democratic credentials and delayed reform since election in 1994 by trying to work with parliament rather than without it, as other post-Soviet leaders, in Russia and Central Asia, have done.

But shortly before the election the IMF and the World Bank suspended huge loan programmes, accusing the Kuchma government of bad faith.

One surprise was the strong showing of the Green Party, which looks set to win around 20 seats. The Chernobyl disaster has given Ukrainians a

and centrists, who went to the polls fragmented into dozens of parties. The nationalist standard bearer, Rukh, scraped into second place with less than nine per cent of the vote and was beaten by Communists in some of its old Kiev strongholds.

One surprise was the strong showing of the Green Party, which looks set to win around 20 seats. The Chernobyl disaster has given Ukrainians a

Armenian vote deals blow to peace

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

THE prospect of a peaceful end to the 10-year conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region decreased yesterday with the victory of nationalist Robert Kocharyan in the second round of Armenia's presidential election.

With more than half the votes counted last night, Mr Kocharyan, aged 43, whose manifesto included

the rejection of a proposed international peace plan for Nagorno-Karabakh, had won 62 per cent of the vote.

The extent of his victory over former Soviet-era ruler Karen Demircchyan, who won 38 per cent, raised suspicions about vote-rigging. Opinion polls gave Mr Kocharyan only a narrow lead on the eve of voting.

International observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe condemned the first round of voting as

"deeply flawed" amid allegations of intimidation by Kocharyan supporters.

While Mr Demircchyan, aged 68, appealed to voters' nostalgia for the stability of the 1970s and 1980s when he was Communist Party boss, Mr Kocharyan vowed to combat corruption.

But the key part of his campaign concerned Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian ethnic enclave within Azerbaijan's borders, where he was born and began his political career.

Mr Kocharyan declared that, after eight years of fighting that killed 35,000 including his brother, Nagorno-Karabakh must become part of Armenia.

His victory is a setback to plans proposed by an OSCE mediation group led by France, Russia and America for Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomy under Azeri sovereignty. The plan had been accepted by the previous president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who was ousted in February.

An elite anti-drug force is accused of using skills learned at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for killings and kidnappings

US trained Mexican 'torture squad'

Phil Gannon in San Juan de Ocotán, Mexico

IT WAS around 2am when a dozen US-trained commandos stormed the low, breezeblock wall surrounding Victoria López's dusty backyard. Led by an officer later identified as Lt Col Julián Guerrero, the hooded soldiers — who wore dark uniforms with no insignia — smashed in her bedroom door while she covered in a corner with her three youngest children.

Having wrecked much of

her furniture, the troops left in search of her eldest son Salvador, one of around 30 boys and young men picked up that night on suspicion of having relieved a drunken soldier of his pistol.

Twenty-nine of them later straggled back to this poor

from a shallow grave a few miles away. Several months later his mother has yet to see the post mortem report. But a witness said that Salvador's tongue had been torn out.

Doña Victoria's uninvited guests belonged to the Gafe (an acronym for Air-Mobile

poorly-armed indigenous guerrillas showed the army was ill-equipped to fight a modern 'low-intensity' war.

Under a 1996 agreement with Washington, Gafe officers are trained in 'counter-narcotics' operations by the 7th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The stated aim is to supplement the rather ineffectual efforts of Mexico's corruption-prone police.

for the drug war. They are for everything. Depending on the particular threat that exists in the region, that's what they specialise in.

US official sources say Gafe training includes 'a substantial human rights component'. But in one three-month period last year in the state of Jalisco (where San Juan de Ocotán is located), the official state human rights commission received 16 complaints about operations apparently involving the unit.

In every case, the soldiers wore masks or face paint and no insignia. They raided hotels and restaurants without presenting search warrants, and frequently kidnapped suspects.

to the national human rights commission, which has yet to take any action. The commission, often criticised as ineffectual in relation to the army, will not return phone calls on the subject.

The worst incident with which the Gafe has been

remote locations. A report in the La Jornada newspaper cited an anonymous police source saying the killings were carried out by Gafe members illegally infiltrated into a since-disbanded, elite police unit. The Guardian traced one of the sources, who

bers, including 13 officers, are in military custody pending an investigation into the San Juan de Ocotán incident. But the victims and their relatives have little confidence in military justice.

The Pentagon admits that some of those involved had received training at Fort Bragg. Officials described the incident euphemistically as one in which 'some soldiers sought retribution for an alleged theft of a watch'.

The Buenos Aires incident is also said to have been triggered by the theft of a watch. Victoria López has refused the army's offer of compensation until Salvador's killers are brought to justice. 'My son wasn't an animal but a human being,' she said.

A witness said that Salvador's tongue had been torn out

community near Guadalajara, the victims of torture which in one case required three weeks in hospital. But Salvador Jiménez López never came home.

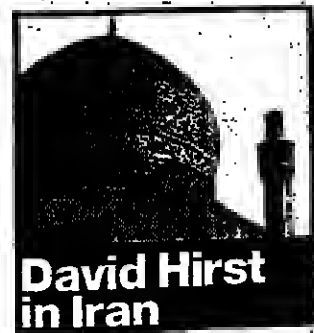
His battered corpse was recovered nearly a week later

Clerical 'fossils' give ground as students take to Tehran's streets

The final article in a three-part series looks at resurgent protest among the young, an echo of the youth unrest which spearheaded the Shah's downfall. Although the self-appointed guardians of Islamic traditionalism appear to be holding their own, they are in reality in retreat before the modernist forces that President Khatami's more liberal regime has begun to unleash



Iranian school girls in high spirits in Tehran, where the mullahs are powerless to stop the spread of music. PHOTOGRAPH: MOHAMMAD SAYYAD



David Hirst in Iran

IT IS the capital's most strategic thoroughfare: natural point of convergence, dividing line between lower-class south and better-off north and, above all, location of Tehran University. Once called Shah Reza Avenue, it was here that dissident students began the demonstrations that led to the Shah's downfall.

It still bears the scars, the bullet holes and chipped concrete, of those violent confrontations — first between the ancien régime and the revolutionaries, and then among the revolutionaries themselves, with the clerically-led Khomeini loyalists finally seizing power.

it was the Office of the Consolidation of Unity that took to the streets, one of many Islamic groups which support the republic — but, like the 'religious intellectuals', seek modernist reform.

They were protesting against the Guardian Council, whose task is to 'guard' against any violation of Islam by parliament. Guided by texts dating from the 13th century, its six mullahs exemplify the 'fossilisation' that President Mohammed Khatami calls the 'internal malady of religion'.

The council also vets candidates for elections, though it made the mistake of leaving Mr Khatami among the surviving four when it disqualified 254 out of 258 presidential hopefuls. The students objected to its veto on pro-Khatami candidates for parliamentary byelections this month.

Constitutionalism is at the heart of President Khatami's strategy to defeat the traditionalists. Just as the traditionalists find all they need in that outlandish document to preserve their ascendancy, so the modernists discern opportunities within it to undermine them.

students protested against the Ansar, provoking open discord at the summit of power. Outwardly, the traditionalists are holding their own, especially on highly charged issues such as relations with the United States, and their formal powers have even been enhanced. But they are demoralised and on the defensive. In practice, they are giving ground in what a veteran journalist, Kaveh Golestan, calls 'a hundred little points of liberation' — the relentless dismantling of the whole mystique of dogma, authority and intimidation. He adds: 'Religious zealotry is out; people just don't buy it anymore.'

'We are seeing the dismantling of the whole mystique of dogma, authority and intimidation. Religious zealotry is out; people just don't buy it anymore'

For modernists, Ayatollah Mohammed Yazdi is the archetype of clerical arrogance and caprice, notorious for outbursts of the kind he made this month. 'Shi'ism's virtue is the freedom of its religious dispensations. But it is only free for the religious authorities — not for kids with little experience.'

Ayatollah Yazdi's soulmate on the Guardian Council, Ayatollah Khatami, recently denounced the 'spread of music'. Under President Khatami, music shops have begun to flaunt their wares with impunity. This month even saw a female singer perform solo before a mixed audience.

Ayatollah Janati, an *eminent* grise of the Ansar, is apparently so dispirited that he no longer blocks rush-hour traffic with impromptu sermons or public morality drives. Ayatollah Yazdi has been induced to suspend the notorious 'temporary arrests' of errant youth. The supreme leader, Ali Khamenei,

has even responded to public clamour by hinting that there is something amiss about a holy law that permits girls to be married off at the age of nine.

all — that will otherwise begin to undermine his prestige. He may get there in the end, but the strategy is painfully slow. How long can people wait? Here is the most demonstrably popular of elected leaders being cheated of his due by the most demonstrably unpopular of unelected oligarchs. Ahan newspaper recently criticised the president for 'avoiding factional confrontation at any price'.

Will the traditionalists, sensing their power slipping away, make one last bid to stop the rot?

One thing is sure; in any showdown the people will rally to Mr Khatami whether he calls on them or not. It is far from sure that Ayatollah Khatami could rely on his 'disciplinary forces' against the people. Most Revolutionary Guards and Basijis defied their commanders to vote for Mr Khatami.

In this latest round in Iran's long contest between tradition and modernity, the Islamic Republic is either drawing to a convulsive close or changing its nature irrevocably. Though its end may not be as dramatic as the Shah's downfall, it will probably please all those mullahs who thought Khomeini's 'clergy-in-politics' an aberration that would bring discredit on themselves, and on Islam.

Martin Kettle in Washington

THE United States administration is preparing to revise a hugely embarrassing Pentagon intelligence report which says Cuba poses little threat to America's national security.

The defence secretary, William Cohen, said yesterday he would take 'the next several days' to decide what to do about the Defence Intelligence Agency's classified document before releasing it to members of Congress who requested it last year.

The report, according to the Miami Herald newspaper, undermines repeated claims by Washington that Fidel Castro — the bogymen of American foreign policy for more than 25 years — is a danger to the US.

Sources say it concludes that Cuba's armed forces have been significantly diminished, its military is geared towards defending Cuba rather than attacking the US, and severe shortages of fuel and spare parts have reduced its Soviet-built MIG jet fighter force to two squadrons, which can take to the air only intermittently. The Pentagon is also said to have reassessed the threat from chemical and biological weapons.

Mr Cohen indicated that administration officials and Pentagon chiefs were meeting this week to 'make it more presentable' in the words of a senior official — that is, to alter it to avoid subverting Washington's continuing anti-Castro position.

'My understanding is that it is completed, and it should arrive at my desk today and then I'll have an opportunity to review it in the next several days and then make comment on it,' Mr Cohen said.

A senior official at the

national security committee

said revisions to the document were designed to make sure the administration was 'speaking with one voice' on Cuba.

'It gets down to terminology and phrasing,' he said. 'This is obviously an issue that has considerable political resonance.' The members of Congress want tougher language in the sections on Havana's capacity to produce biological

weapons, even though the Clinton administration publicly concedes that Cuba has no such weapons and it was not mentioned in a Pentagon list last year of rogue states having the potential to deploy weapons of mass destruction.

General John Sheehan, who until last year commanded US forces in the Caribbean and is a leading supporter of closer links with Havana, said he was not surprised by the report's conclusions.

'Cuba is all defensive in orientation and their strategy is, if the US attacks, they will fight a guerrilla war,' he said.

The administration has gingerly dipped a toe into the water of better relations with Havana by announcing a resumption of humanitarian contacts suspended in 1996 after Cuba shot down two planes piloted by anti-Castro Cuban exile groups.

The move produced the expected angry reaction from the powerful anti-Castro lobby on Capitol Hill, including opposition from the chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, Senator Jesse Helms.

He helped to draft the so-called Helms-Burton laws, which impose penalties on companies and countries which ignore the US blockade of Cuba.

Haryana reverts to drunken state

Suzanne Goldenberg in Gurgaon, Haryana

THE northern state of Haryana, home to some of the hardest men in India known for their fighting spirit and their devotion to drink, is repealing prohibition today after two dry years.

'People are going to go absolutely mad,' said Satpal Yadav, a life insurance salesman. 'It will be out of control. They are going to stand in the road, and drink and fight and swear.'

Delhi's English-language newspapers, liquor barons and the hotel industry have mostly backed the repeal of what they saw as an unpopular, antiquated measure that did not even work.

But Haryana's chief minister, Bansi Lal, was elected in 1995 because he promised to ban alcohol and social reformers regret the demise of his experiment, arguing that alcohol has been the ruin of Indian villages. 'Alcohol is a big enemy of domestic peace and the largest source of violence against women,' said the Hindu reformer Swami Agnivesh.

The men of Haryana got the taste for drink in the army of the Raj, and the state still provides more than its share of soldiers for the Indian armed forces.

The drinkers' delight at an end to prohibition is shared by the state's revenue department, deprived of more than 10,000 million rupees (\$154 million) in tax since July 1996. This forced the Haryana government to levy 3,100 million rupees (\$47 million) in new taxes, and to withhold salaries and pensions from hundreds of state employees.

Before prohibition, Haryana's liberal liquor laws made it a playground for the capital's elite, and a home to professional companies driven out by Delhi's high real estate prices.

Universities offer to take Mayor Barry off city hands

Martin Kettle in Washington

AN INFLUENTIAL group of businessmen and college principals are making Washington's troubled mayor an offer they hope he can't refuse — a lucrative academic post, created for him, in return for a promise that he does not run for office again.

The deal would give Marion Barry, who is 62, a five- or 10-year visiting professorship in 'urban politics' to a consortium of local universities. He would be paid more than \$100,000 (65,000 plus benefits in a package that is said to be worth \$2 million).

In return, Mr Barry would have to pledge not to run again for the post which he has held for 16 of the past 20 years. He was re-elected in 1994 after his arrest in 1990 on a drugs charge, for which he later served six months in prison. He was filmed by the FBI smoking crack in a hotel room with a prostitute.

A college principal said 'everybody wins' if the deal comes off. 'The mayor has dignity, and the city no longer has him as mayor.'

Mr Barry, who is a Democrat, has not said if he intends to run for a fifth term in November. He would probably be re-elected because of his strong support among Washington's black majority.

Mr Barry confirmed the offer had been made.

'I have not decided whether or not I am going to run for mayor. I am aware that some friends of mine are saying 'Just in case you decide not to run, here are some opportunities for you', he said yesterday.

His personal notoriety and inefficient running of Washington have combined to embarrass successive US administrations. Many of his powers were taken over in 1997 when Congress imposed a control board to run the city's basic services.

Despite being discredited, Mr Barry's electoral power base is still intact. The mayor, who said in a 1991 interview that 'I would have been come an integral part of my lifestyle', now claims to have cleaned up his act.



Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

I AM delighted to note the rise of Fraser Kemp, Labour MP for Houghton and Washington East. Fraser is widely tipped to star in a new Channel 4 sitcom about a man who rings a radio psychiatrist after confusing soap opera with documentary, after petitioning Jack Straw over the imprisonment of a Coronation Street character. "There has been an appalling miscarriage of justice relating to Deirdre Rachid, nee Barlow, of Coronation St. Weatherfield," the Mirror quotes him as saying. Oh dear: Ken Barlow was Deirdre's second husband. "I said 'formerly Barlow,'" he insists when we call. "Nee" is not a word I would use. "Thank God. We would hate anyone to mistake you for a politician seeking to cash in on populist sentiment. 'No, no, I've watched it for 35 years.'" So what was Deirdre's maiden name? "Er..." For the record, it was Hunt. As for Fraser Kemp (nee Kemp), this inability to separate fact from fiction is a very smart career move: should he ever lose his seat, a berth has been reserved for him, we gather, in Alastair Campbell's office.

SPREADING ALL, a short story (unsigned, but after the style of the Riviera Gigolo) has been sent anonymously to the Diary. The Spanking Spinner is the tale of a government propagandist who punishes disobedience with a slipper. "My disciplinary duties were onerous, not only toward a press which (with the exception of the excellent Guardian Diary) talked bollocks," reads an early passage, "but ministers too. Take Hatty. Hatty was a very naughty girl, always leading to the papers, and she had to be punished. One lunchtime, I summoned her to my room, and ordered her to take down her..." But no more today. We will rejoin the Spanking Spinner soon, to learn of Hatty's fate.

TREMELOUS news. A copy of The Quotable Paul Johnson: A Topical Compilation Of His Wit, Wisdom And Satire (Sanity Books, \$16) has been located at Joseph's Bookshop in Temple Fortune, north London. The book is reissued, at a bargain price of \$5.95.

YESTERDAY, the first Labour candidates for the Scottish parliament. The first question, one tells us, went thus: "You'll be standing as a New Labour candidate. What are the main differences between Old and New Labour?" The second was better: "Is there anything that, if Tony Blair snapped his fingers and asked you to do it, it asked, 'you would not do it?' Absolutely marvellous."

THANKS for your reports on the viewing of Rupert Soames's French Empire chair on Saturday. In the Five Arrows Hotel car park in Wadeston (Rupert was forced to exhibit it to comply with an inheritance tax exemption), Matthew Emerson says the chair was "green and rather large. Low to the floor. It would have made an ideal chair for his brother Paddy." Rupert would not allow him access until he had taken his name, address, and even his phone number, and would not permit photographs to be taken. Simon Clayton was more impressed, describing Rupert as "very pleasant and obliging".

A COLLEAGUE rings to report his safe rescue from a Cabinet Office lift, after being trapped for half an hour. He was on his way to a briefing on how to stop the millennium bug bringing life, among other things, to a standstill.



If you've stared death in the face, try keeping your upper lip stiff

Katharine Viner



STRESS counsellors sit on every school bus going into Jonesboro, Arkansas, last week. There was a counsellor in every classroom, in every local school; every child in Arkansas had a chance to share their feelings. When a little girl was worried that there were people "off in the woods with guns", it was stress counsellors who reassured her. They came to Jonesboro as they came to every tragedy in this country, too: in Britain, there are now more counsellors than soldiers or vicars.

On a smaller scale, a spokesperson for the Leeds United players in Monday night's plane crash said that stress counselling was "possible in the near future", and they might be well advised: Fiona Cathcart, a clinical psychologist with Edinburgh Health Care NHS Trust, warned that the footballers could be traumatised for months.

But a report to be published in June suggests that stress counselling is the very worst thing you can do for people who have suffered a major trauma. Author Angela Patmore is running a conference entitled Stress: A Change Of Direction, in which she will argue that we should accept stress as a natural and useful mechanism and that calming people down is the wrong approach. Yvonne McEwan, a "trauma expert" and speaker at the conference, takes it further. "Most people in sudden traumatic situations require three basic things," she says. "Their rights, their liberties, and information about what's going on. Just talking is not the primary concern of trauma victims."

The Daily Mail's Lynda Lee

Potter, meanwhile, appears to regard it as her Great British duty to kick trauma counsellors at every opportunity — "the belief that counselling is the answer to any problem undermines the strength of the human character," she writes. And yet the resistance appears to be motivated more from a cultural than scientific viewpoint: the jibes against counselling are often really sneers at the perceived Americanisation of our culture, the loss of the old ways of stiff upper lips and buttoned-up feelings.

Nonetheless, stress counselling has emerged as the standard, and often successful, approach to traumatic situations in the 1990s. Whether it is children killed in Dunblane, or Gulf War veterans returning home, or journalists at the Rosemary West trial, or the friends of teenagers killed in a car crash, counsellors are called in. Their aim is to help victims comprehend what has happened and why they might be experiencing the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder — extreme anxiety, flashbacks. Counsellors stress that it is not a therapy.

One of the technique's notable successes was John McCarthy, who spent two weeks at RAF Lyneham in his release after five years' captivity in Beirut. He was debriefed by Dr Gordon Turnbull, then Wing-Commander, who is now Clinical Director of Ticehurst House Hospital Traumatic Stress Unit; they spent two weeks together establishing facts, impressions, feelings, symptoms, practicalities. Indeed McCarthy's recovery appears to demonstrate the power of the technique, since his fellow hostage Brian Keen-

an's story provides an all-important control. McCarthy was released in 1991, after the Gulf War, which was the period when the military began to take post-traumatic stress disorder seriously. Keenan, however, was released before the Gulf War. In 1990, was not debriefed and flew straight from a cell in Beirut to his family's home in Belfast. His recovery was markedly slower than McCarthy's.

Both Keenan and McCarthy wrote books about their experiences. Turnbull calls them

A population so traumatised they still jump with every thunder clap

"interesting examples of the ongoing debriefing."

One reason why John McCarthy was treated as such a hero on his release from Beirut was, in his own words, because "I was a symbol of how people hoped they would cope in similar circumstances. The fact that I'd walked out smiling after five years of captivity, when others had apparently found far shorter periods utterly traumatising... gave people a huge lift."

His initial poise was perhaps unsurprising, because it is only later — after the captivity, or the shooting, or the war, is over — that the really difficult issues emerge. As Alan Little said about Sarajevo in a recent BBC programme, "In the war you lived each day with the knowl-

edge that it might be your last... And then in the sudden absence of war, a profound collective trauma emerges, affecting everyone."

In war, as in Arkansas, the problems linger because of a loss of faith in human goodness.

Doctors in Sarajevo have made an attempt to address the psychiatric problems caused by their war. The head of the psychiatric department at Kosevo Hospital there has a strategy committed to helping people understand what the war did to them.

This might not rid them of their suffering — when a man has seen his 62-year-old wife raped by militia and then later found her hanged, it is unlikely that the trauma will ever leave — but it gives victims some kind of context for their feelings.

Other cities decimated by war, like Beirut, have done nothing — no help offered, no acknowledgment that it might be needed — with the result that the population is still massively traumatised and when there is an electric storm, as there was last week, they jump with every thunder clap.

We should learn from these examples. Post-traumatic stress disorder is not new; it's just another name for shell shock, for which at least 30,000 first world war soldiers were evacuated from France to Britain.

What is new is that there are now methods with which we can treat it, and in our anxiety to retort a British stiff upper lip, we must not disregard what people tell us from the battlefield.

Jonathan Freedland is away

Mind the iceberg

Polly Toynbee



MONDAY sees the launch of Labour's greatest gamble, the pillar on which all their policy, ideology and credibility depends. For on Monday the "new deal" for the young unemployed rolls out across the nation. Imagine it if it failed. What if it made little difference? The waste of that \$3.5 billion would be nothing compared to the ruin it would make of Labour's whole social strategy. Work lies at the heart of everything, transforming poverty, removing those who have lost hope. Whoever you talk to, the metaphors tumble out — this is Labour's flagship, linchpin, cornerstone, *sine qua non*.

But there are doubters. They point to regional patterns of unemployment and ask why the Government spends so much on making the unemployed "job-ready" in places where there are no jobs? The highest rates of youth and long-term unemployment, lone mothers and long-term sick are in the areas where there is already most competition for each job vacancy. Researchers at Glasgow University have just published a sombre warning: "In areas of high unemployment, the programme will be trying to push all four groups into jobs in local labour markets already suffering an acute over-supply of labour."

Welfare to work, they complain, suggests there is something intrinsically lacking in the unemployed. But if so, how odd that this deficiency should match so exactly the areas of high structural unemployment. It is the jobs that are lacking, not the people, they say. So the Glasgow team calls for a redirection of money to major public works to create jobs in difficult places. The TUC and Derek Foster, chair of the House of Commons employment select committee, both call for local authorities to be allowed to invest in new projects and new jobs.

This, you might say, is the politics of Old Labour, all big economic levers and state provision. Yet the danger of failure is also whispered by some anxious New Labourites in those constituencies where they know the size of the problem. The new deal will be launched high into the cloudless air of a boom inflated by the usual buxuriant talk of the end of economic cycles as we know them. But unemployment is predicted to rise by the end of the year — just in time for the first new dealers to finish their four-month Gateway and their six-month training or work experience, and go looking for permanent jobs.

THE sniper on the opposition benches, David Willetts, publishes a pamphlet next Monday warning of all such schemes as are launched in boom, and go bust with the economy. Flooded out with too many unemployed, costing too much to sustain. To be sure it'll do some good, but too little to measure, at too high a cost. Anyway it's the middle-aged who need help — most of the young do well for themselves. Chief architect of the thinking behind new deal is LSE Professor Richard Layard. It has been his long-held view that unemployment makes people less employable, detaching them permanently from the work force, even when times get better. They are a self-perpetuating pool with depleted skills and work habits, fatally discriminated against when they do seek work.

These are two diametrically opposed views of the nature of unemployment. The new deal will be a massive social experiment to discover who is right — the Layard psychological model, or the Old Labour model. One side says however job-ready people are, nothing's to be done if there are no jobs. The Layard-Blain school says this isn't a zero-sum

game. For instance, most of the unemployed live within an hour's travel of a high employment area: overcome their fears and their transport problems and you transform their chances. (Some pilots help with high transport costs). Layard believes the individual can overcome, and better training does create new jobs. What's more, his projects often don't create jobs: look how Docklands didn't help the East Enders. Out there on the ground, battalions of new-deal managers in job centres everywhere are filled with the Layard spirit, raring to go, brimming with conviction that it will work. It's rare to find such straightforward optimism from a long depressed and derided branch of the civil service. Even the manager in Knowsley, Merseyside, one of the worst unemployment blackspots, waxed lyrical. His young people just didn't get fair access to the available jobs. No, they would not be going through the revolving door of yet another scheme. He will not give up on anyone and he was determined, absolutely determined, they will get work. Local employers are helpful, more work is coming in, new jobs created. This was what the employment service has always wanted, the chance to work intensively with each client. His new personal advisers couldn't wait to begin. It was the same story when I talked to managers in Lambeth, Cornwall and Newcastle.

Those who have been running pathfinder projects for the past three months are, if anything, even more enthusi-



The Chancellor should invest more than he plans in job creation

astic. "We're changing people's lives and employers are responding magnificently." "The word on the street is so good, we're being inundated with requests for help in of their own accord." "We're raising young people's expectations, encouraging them to go for better jobs than they believed they could do." They pour out genuinely moving anecdotes of redemption and hope. They tell tales of the deep concern and close relationships built between personal advisers and clients, taking the nervous to interviews, finding them places to live and ways round immense obstacles. "At last we're not policemen but friends."

Tomorrow, at a briefing on progress so far, tentative figures will be given, but as yet signifying nothing. (Beware both pros and anti making claims for a long time yet.) Listening to the tales from the front, it's impossible not to believe new deal will do immense good. But the proof will come eventually if youth unemployment falls in relation to adult unemployment — and at what cost.

So who will be right, the doomsters or the enthusiasts? If it were the Chancellor, I'd be inclined to take out an each-way bet. While convinced of the redemptive value of the endeavour, he would do well to consider investing more than he currently plans in finely-targeted job creation in the hardest areas. If he did that, the academic debate would of course continue, as it would muddy the pure nature of the experiment. But this is politics and one way or another, the new deal cannot be allowed even a small risk of failure.

The Foreign Secretary plans to use global websites to snare child sex abusers

The net closes

Robin Cook

NOTHING steals a child's innocence more than sexual abuse. It is the shame of all our societies.

In Britain, we have realised for some years that no part of the country or society is immune from child abuse. Other countries are still learning that lesson.

All the 25 countries in London today for the second Asia-Europe meeting share a determination to fight this evil. And so, as well as having trade agendas, we will use the meeting to take international cooperation for child welfare to a new level — by all our police forces, governments and charities. Other major issues are on the agenda in London but none, I predict, will so unite participants as the plan of action we are going to put forward to protect our children from abuse.

Britain and the Philippines are already breaking new ground on this subject. Last year I went to the Philippines and met some of the victims of abuse for myself. Their cheery faces masked the damage which had been done to them by adults. Some of the children had been abused by a British paedophile, who was thankfully later convicted and sentenced to 16 years in a Philippine jail.

These children have been let down by adults. I promised those children that we would not let them down again. To keep that promise I signed an agreement with the Philippine government — the first of its kind in the world.

We now share intelligence. Our police work together. And we learn from each other. A team of experts from Durham Constabulary went to the Philippines to share their expertise in child protection with the local police.

It is a success story we are repeating all over the world. A team from Scotland Yard has gone to Sri Lanka to train police officers from all over the Indian sub-continent. Detectives from Northumbria police are going to Bangkok to work with the Thai police force. We are sending a clear message to the child abusers — we are not going to let you abuse our children. You will be caught.

This week, a British-Philippine initiative will bring Europe and Asia together to give our children a happier future. We will agree a plan of practical action to protect them. It will start with a meeting of our experts in Manila in June, which will be followed by a major conference in London in October.

We will find ways we can work together. We will make sure that we learn from each other's mistakes, swapping our expertise on

how to prosecute sex offenders. We will be exchanging experts, and make sure that our police forces talk to one another.

We will let each other know what we know about sex abusers travel so that we can prevent them from abusing children away from home. We will look at

but children's charities as well. Groups like Save the Children and Childline have vast amounts of experience in dealing with child abuse. We will make sure that their voice is heard clearly by all the authorities who deal with the problem.

And the initiative will give our children a voice as well. Too often we discuss children's issues without actually listening to what they have to say. When we do stop and listen, we learn an awful lot. We find out how important the family is to all children. We hear how their first line of defence is their parents, and how devastating it is to be betrayed by the very people they most need to trust.

This is what diplomacy should be about — not cocktail parties setting up a website to keep each other up-to-date and give everyone access to the latest developments. There will be a host of practical measures, all with one aim — to look after our children. Our initiative will bring together not just governments and police forces,

This is what diplomacy should be about. Not cocktail parties

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Wiring Britannia

We need speedy access

WHATEVER HAPPENED to the ambitious plans to turn Britain into a 21st-century information technology society with high-capacity links to homes, schools and hospitals the length and breadth of the nation? Just over ten years ago the Conservatives decided that if a nationwide grid of high-capacity fibre-optic links was a good idea then market forces and the private sector alone must be left to decide on its feasibility. Perversely, however, it excluded BT — the only company with the financial muscle — from doing it because government didn't want it to be allowed to send television signals down telephone lines (the only thing making it commercially attractive) for monopoly reasons. At a party conference in Brighton before the election, Labour made a controversial deal with BT to release it from the ban in return for building a fibre-optic grid to homes costing up to £15 billion. Not much has been heard of that since, apart from reports that BT may be cooling on the idea (though Chris Smith, Culture Secretary, said yesterday there would be a statement within weeks).

But before anything like that happens the Government could do something more practical, much more cheaply, and which would have strong knock-on effects on the rest of the economy: it could act as the catalyst to bring about the construction of a grid with high, two-way bandwidth (enabling moving pictures to travel in both directions) linking schools and colleges to each other, and hospitals to GPs. To its

credit the Government is already planning to link schools into a national learning grid. The drawback is that it won't be broadband. This is like building a shunting railway line when you have the technology for a high-speed link. Pupils need a fast two-way link to the Internet because present slow response speeds will break their concentration span and deprive them of the true capability of interactive learning (like 3D images and instant exchange of practically anything that can be reduced to digital form).

What can high-speed links do? Yesterday at the National Liberal Club in London a GP in Portsmouth demonstrated how an ultrasound scanner could be used to transmit live images from the surgery to a consultant in London. Trials suggest that in two-thirds of cases this would enable the GP authoritatively not to refer patients to a hospital, who otherwise would have been, thereby saving large resources in terms of unnecessary journeys, scarce consultants' time and waiting lists. The lobby behind yesterday's demonstration (former senior managers and directors of BT) reckons that, far from needing lottery money, the scheme would pay for itself and save the Treasury £400 million a year. The private sector would fund the capital costs, then rent out the equipment to schools and hospitals.

Why then aren't firms rushing to install this technology? The problem is that the full benefits for education and health will only happen when the full network is in place (so a remote doctor in the highlands can communicate with a specialist in Devon). Like letters, like the fax, like telephones, it will be no use if only "two" people are hooked up. This is why the Government has a central role: not as bank manager but as an enabler. Since govern-

ment controls the public sector, it is uniquely placed to leapfrog Britain into the van of the digital revolution at little cost. The technology is there: fibre optics, cable modems and even radio are all capable of high-speed broadband delivery. The proper wiring of Britain's schools and hospitals should be central to Tony Blair's philosophy of enabling people rich and poor to fulfill their potential, a sort of digital socialism. It would also put real fire behind the concept of Cool Britannia. Mr Blair should go for it.

Spin on the EU

Blair gives 45 of the best

TO SAY that the European Union is important is knocking at an open door for the majority of people who already think so. For those who remain more sceptical, the report released yesterday by Downing Street may not be quite so convincing as the Prime Minister believes it to be.

Mr Blair did not exactly undersell its appeal yesterday: he spoke of a positive approach to Europe as one of the Government's key modernising goals. He claimed great progress to "improve the quality of people's lives". He praised Robin Cook (just fractionally over the top) for doing a "brilliant job". He enthused about the new millennium, the people's agenda, and the building of a decent society "for all our people". That doesn't sound bad going at all for just three months' work. This is, after all, only a half-term report on the UK's six month presidency.

It is hard to know where to taste first from the box of Euro-goodies supplied by No 10. Which of the 45 different items counted as "achievements" by the Govern-

ment will best demonstrate what can be gained by Working Closely with our Partners in Europe? Could it be Enterprising Europe — the prospect that European businessmen and women will shortly meet to make "concrete recommendations" on how to encourage a climate of entrepreneurship? Or might it rather be the gratifying progress recorded only a few days ago by the Environment Council "to improve the role of zoos in animal conservation"? Mr Blair himself may attach greater importance to his phenomenal success in ensuring that "the bug is on the agenda of all international meetings this year". That's the millennium bug in case of any confusion.

If a scintilla of scepticism is detected in the reception of this document, it has to do not with the subject but with the scattergun approach. Lumping big and little issues together in this random manner (all the important foreign initiatives, from enlargement to Kosovo, come at the end of the report) invites a cynical response. Some of the "achievements" are new, but others merely follow through initiatives started under previous presidencies. Even on enlargement it is a shade economical with the truth, as the argument over Cyprus continues, to claim that it "got off to a flying start". And it is hard to reconcile Mr Blair's claim that monetary union is a "historic task" with the terse (and illiterate) paragraph which the report provides on the same subject.

Why do all British governments feel obliged to claim such huge merit for doing the job of presidency which falls to every member state by rotation? It is also curious to see how "Europe" remains a more acceptable synonym for the EU — as in Gordon Brown's initiative on "getting Europe's employment policies and markets

in shape". The Foreign Office would surely cringe to be thought responsible for the terse sentences on "the rest of the world". The whole jumbled-up collection of one-liners is a disappointment. Or was it intended as a plain man's guide to Europe for Rupert Murdoch?

Drowsy drivers

Needed: a wake-up call

TIREDDNESS KILLS. But how often do we heed the warning and take a break from driving as soon as it is needed — or preferably before? A new study showing that most people spend too long at the wheel without a break only confirms what most of us must already know from our own experience. The pressure to keep driving comes from various sources. There may be nowhere suitable except a filthy and lead-laden layby. It may even seem a bit feeble to confess to fellow-passengers to feeling tired.

The study shows that most people will only take one break in a six-hour journey, whereas one stop at least every two hours is advised. The temptation is strong to wind down the window and rely on a blast of not-so-fresh air instead. Yet falling asleep at the wheel carries an above-average risk of causing death — not just to the driver or passengers but to innocent people in cars which get in the way.

Motorways are in many respects safer, but the monotony of driving and the difficulty of stopping increase the risk of sleeping at the wheel. Service stations may be dismal places, but some motorways need more of them: Shell's offer of free coffee at petrol stations over Easter may be a ploy but there is a serious point behind it.

Letters to the Editor

Report goes pear-shaped

I AM writing in response to your unbalanced and inaccurate attack on the News of the World and its investigations editor (Blowing the whistle on Toongate, March 30). Bearing in mind the thrust of your piece, it is ironic that Roy Greenslade sought to obtain information (and received full co-operation) by use of the very subterfuge he so deplores. Mr Greenslade's words to me when he rang last week were that he wanted to pay a tribute to the amazing skills of Mazhar Mahmood. Some tribute, Phil Hall, Editor, News of the World.

I HAVE always understood that the term pear-shaped (Letters, March 31) has nothing to do with body shape, but originates from the habit of placing the thumb and forefinger together to form a circle, as a sign that something is "just right". If this circle is relaxed it goes pear-shaped, that is "not quite right". Dr Stephen Wright, Hookwood, Surrey.

THERE is a problem. Comic pears are short and fat. Conference long and thin and Abate Fete! too unusual to even attempt a description. Fuj! apples, on the other hand, are flat and squat, and Golden Delicious big on top and skinny below. Pears are the only really round variety. So negative outcomes ought to be "a right Cox up". Chris White, Eurofruit Magazine, London.

THERE are many reasons why we were elected on May 1. Alistair (sic) Campbell is one of them. He is doing the job he was appointed to do and doing it very well. Deborah Mordaunt MP, Caroline Flint MP, Joan Ryan MP, Rosie Winterton MP, Jacqui Smith MP.

Ireland on brink — of peace

I LIVE at a north Belfast interface between Protestant and Catholic communities — a prime site to observe the evolution of the Northern Ireland conflict. I witness the unprecedented efforts of the security services — to prevent militant right-wing unionists from sabotaging the peace process. After a period of uncertainty, the Rubicon has been crossed — through the expulsion from and voluntary re-entry to the peace talks of the Loyalist UDF and then Sein Fein. Despite the obstacles (Death squad conspiracy, March 30), I am now confident there can be a lasting settlement of the conflict.

The basis is on the table: removal of the offensive claim of jurisdiction over Ulster Protestant British people by Irish people, via the Republic of Ireland constitution; in return for the ending of the offensive usurpation by Ulster Protestants of the exclusive right to determine the national and political identity of Northern Ireland.

This is a potential win-win scenario. Changes to the Irish constitution will please and relieve Ulster unionists, through the recognition and acceptance of their inalienable right to separate self-determination as a people. An all-Ireland referendum will give justice to republicans and nationalists who feel cheated by partition after their cause in the 1918 election.

I am confident an opportunity will arise, probably in the presence of the US president — when David Trimble and Gerry Adams will shake hands in view of the world. This will come about as the consequence of the last instance in modern Ireland when the gun will have been used as a tool of political endeavour: held figuratively, that is, to the heads of Trimble and Adams by British, Irish, and American governments. John Hoey, Belfast.

GARETH Peirce thinks that the murderous actions of a few hundred political thugs is a war (War and Lies, March 26). If she bothered to do some research, she would find that the Catholic population in Northern Ireland has increased since 1922, while the Protestant population in the Republic has decreased by 85 per cent.

The Protestants voted with their feet because of a fascist theocracy which introduced censorship, criminalised birth control and divorce, and controlled education and the social services. No wonder Catholics fled to the freedom of Northern Ireland! J Roberts, Bishop's Stortford.

THE "news" that the British Army has colluded with the IRA in the murder of Catholics is common knowledge in nationalist circles. The questions to be answered are, how long has the Government been aware of this collusion and what steps is it taking to bring the guilty persons to justice. Until we get a satisfactory answer, no wonder all Blair and Mowlem can complain if the IRA decides to end its ceasefire. William Benton, Birmingham.

Tittle-tattle about my bestseller

YOU refer to the "myriad howlers" in my new book, *A History of the American People* (May, March 31). This is the eighth time you have published this or similar untrue or defamatory statements about my book, in the hope of damaging its sales. Your campaign reflects the well-known technique of the New York left who regularly describe as grossly inaccurate books they dislike for ideological reasons. A recent victim

was Norman Davies, whose *A History of Europe* has rightly been acclaimed worldwide. The mendacious assault on its accuracy has failed and its book continues to sell large numbers of copies. It is the same with my book, which is on the main bestseller lists in the United States. Those interested in the truth, as opposed to Guardian tittle-tattle, should know I have just received a letter from Daniel J Flynn, executive di-

rector of the Institute for Accuracy in Academia, whose staff have been through every word of my book. He writes: "I read many books and most have many times more errors condensed in fewer pages. You should be proud that the mistakes in your book are few and far between." There are not "myriad howlers" in my book, just the usual quota of slips and typographical mistakes, all of which have now been corrected for the latest printing. Paul Johnson, London.



Nightmare on mobile phone line

WHILE travelling between Paddington and Bristol Parkway on an evening commuter train recently, the pleasure of my journey was wrecked by the person next to me who constantly made and received calls on his mobile telephone.

There are several reasons why mobile telephones are so intrusive. Firstly people tend to shout into them. Secondly, it is very difficult for unwilling recipients of the call not to find themselves filling in the missing half of the conversation. Finally, the conversation is often accompanied by exaggerated gestures of hand waving, shoulder hunching and face laughing. Imagine how irritating it would be if I read the newspaper out loud while sitting on the train — the equivalent of talking into a mobile telephone. It is a shame that

people are not sophisticated enough to realise how utterly tiresome these devices can be to those around them. As a consequence, train travel has now become something of a nightmare. I for one, will be reverting back to the comfort and privacy of my car until British Rail and the other operating companies start to take mobile intrusion more seriously. Surely, it's only a matter of time until the first "mobile rage" incident occurs, or has it already happened? Jonathan Cockburn, Hewsfield, Glos.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters; shorter ones are more likely to appear. We cannot acknowledge those not quoted. The Country Diary is on page 10.

Number is up for computer giants who created the bug

WHY should funds be diverted from the NHS or from education to meet the astronomical costs of rectifying the millennium bug? (Blair funds bug-buster training, but won't help public, March 31.) Shouldn't those who stand to make further billions from a problem they created foot the bill? Perhaps Marx was wrong and it is Bill Gates rather than the working class who will bring about the collapse of capitalism. Dr Nickie Charles, University of Wales, Swansea.

WHAT if the building industry had knowingly, foolishly or just incompetently provided buildings at risk of collapse or gross malfunction on a particular date? Vivian Levitt, Chartered architect, London.

AS ONE who in the early 1970s wrote some of the programmes now causing the millennium-bug panic, I would like to correct the impression that

we are to blame. IBM operating systems then only asked for the date in the form dd/mm/yy. When some ludicrous US firm recognises this, the court case could be the next millennium's most expensive. John Hingworth, Bradford.

WHO designed and sold PCs and software in the late 20th century and failed to realise that the year after 1999 starts with a 2? Mac computers have no such problem and, since this is not a bug, Macs are safe. PC owners should ask for refunds so they can buy computers designed by someone less stupid. Connor Walsh, London.

S O Don Cruickshank from Oxfel is going to externalise the millennium bug. It won't be long now until he tells us that the year 2000 will have to be changed to (2)000. Dannie Bonner, Keele University.

Prague Writers' Festival 1998

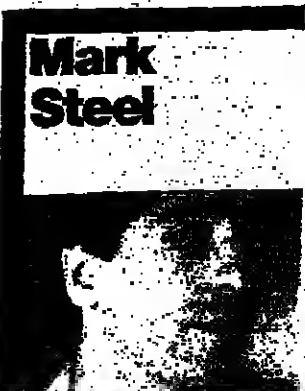
The 8th Prague Writers' Festival presents a selection of fine authors from the Czech Republic and around the world. Meet them at the Franz Kafka Centre, Old Town Square, at 7 pm from 20 to 25 April.

Monday 20 April Lawrence Ferlinghetti Antigone Kafala Michael March Josef Topol	City Lights USA Australia USA Czech Republic
Tuesday 21 April Martin Amis Brian Patten Per Olov Enquist Isabel Fonseca	British Day Great Britain Great Britain Sweden USA
Wednesday 22 April Pedro Tamen Mário Souza Mia Couto Germano Almeida Tahar Ben Jelloun Miroslav Holub	Portuguese-Language Day Portugal Brazil Mozambique Cape Verde Morocco Czech Republic
Thursday 23 April Lilian Faschingler Robert Menasse Claudio Magris Ludvik Vaculik	Austrian Day Austria Austria Italy Czech Republic
Friday 24 April Robert Creeley John Banville Dante Marijanacci Rhea Galanaki Mila Haugová Viera Prokešová Daniela Fischerová	For Bohumil Hrabal USA Ireland Italy Greece Slovakia Slovakia Czech Republic
Saturday 25 April Ryszard Krynicki Andrzej Szczępiński György Petri	Polish Day Poland Poland Hungary

The Festival is dedicated to Bohumil Hrabal. Patron: the City of Prague. For further details, please contact the Prague Writers' Festival Foundation, Staroměstské nám. 22, Prague 1 tel/fax +420 2 24 21 30 30

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Deirdre's bum rap



THE campaign to free Coronation Street's Deirdre has got off to a marvellous start, thanks mostly to The Sun which has produced T-shirts, car stickers and petitions. But every campaign has a difficult second phase, for which The Sun, new to the world of agitation, may not be prepared.

First there'll be a split on the organising committee. A Maoist group will then insist that the campaign's demands include autonomy for Kurds. Then, after a demonstration, there'll be a scurrilous attack from a right-wing newspaper, quoting a police chief as saying: "This lot are just trouble-makers from outside the area. Most of them don't even live in Weatherfield."

Then the backlash will start. On hearing about the campaign, Michael Howard will probably issue a statement saying: "This woman was convicted by the fairest system of justice in the world. I have studied the last 80 episodes of Coronation Street and am perfectly satisfied that the sentence is a correct one. Mr Murdoch, no doubt under the influence of his business associate, Mr Blair, is proving by his actions that he is the criminal's friend." A high court judge will go

on Radio 4 to say: "Is it any wonder, when a provocative young woman deliberately leads a fine man on by wearing seductive thick, round glasses, that he succumbs to temptation, forges a mortgage and credit cards, proposes to her, marries and then denies the whole thing?"

David Trimble will say: "That members of the Government have expressed support for this woman's release is a calculated insult to the Protestant community." Deirdre's best piece of luck is to be on ITV, which has the world's most compassionate police force, as shown in The Bill. "I feel really sorry for that kid, what chance has she got?" they'll say about a black teenage burglar whenever I see it. And I'm sure there are some episodes where the sergeant says: "I tell you what, come and live with me for a while. You can teach me and

the wife how to rap, and I'll see about getting you into law school." Any police force other than the ITV version would have glanced at Deirdre's statement, noticed her surname was Rachid and tried to do her for the Lockerbie bombing as well.

She's especially fortunate not to be on Brookside, whose plots come from last week's news. Within a month there'll be a woman boxer and Sinbad will write an article for the local paper which doesn't get printed because it's critical of the Chinese take-away and the owner is the editor's friend. If Deirdre was on that, by Saturday she'd have changed her name to Deirdre Dazzle, had a No 1 single, and the programme would end with her sheepishly downloading from the internet while the police prepared to burst in. There is another positive side to her plight. The fact that her predicament is be-

lievable is a sign of the times: that law and order is no longer considered infallible. Ten years ago there were still plenty of people who believed that if someone was in prison, they must have done something. One miscarriage of justice after another has destroyed that myth, and although Deirdre is a victim of police and judicial inefficiency rather than outright corruption, her bewilderment and cries of "I haven't done anything" must now seem utterly plausible to the millions who watch her.

Although when the lights out call was made, she did look especially naive asking "What's that?", and, upon being told, protesting, "But it's only half past eight." She should concentrate on the positive: while she's inside, she only has to put up with Ken Barlow for 20 minutes a week during visiting hours. This is the man who

wouldn't believe that she'd been taken in by a conman, yet he was one of the only people in the country gullible enough to believe Neil Hamilton.

And she should be thankful she's fictional. Otherwise her treatment from the tabloids would be a shade different. The Sun says. So, Deirdre the darling dither should be released say campaigners! It's not enough that she was caught red-handed: forging a credit card in a false name; fiddling her way to a free house; and fooling between ex-lovers Ken Barlow and Mike Baldwin. Now, at taxpayers' expense she wants you to pay for an appeal! As if our over-stretched Bobbies have got nothing else to do. Some newspapers have even produced stickers! How appropriate! The only support you'll get from us is advice on where to stick them!

Ministering for the interior

PHOTOGRAPH: KENNETH SAUNDERS

David Nightingale Hicks, interior decorator, born March 25, 1929; died March 29, 1998

A poet at large in Rose Street

Bethlehem's peace-maker

David Sharrock

Elias Freij, politician, born 1918; died March 29, 1998

Death Notices

BRIGHAM. March 29th, peacefully at Aldgate General Hospital, Shrewton, Salisbury of Aldwick, Bingley, West Yorks. Tom, aged 72 years, (former Head of Campus, Bingley

April 3rd, 2:30pm at Nab W
rum, Shipley. Friends please
crummodum chard Elms

GLEASON On 23rd March, suddenly after a brief illness, Terry aged 48 years. Beloved husband of Barbara and adored father of Phoebe and Gabriel. Funeral and Thanksgiving Service at 11.00am, Sunday 24th March, 11am, Monday 6th April. No flowers please, donations to Shelter or Amnesty International welcome.

[illegible]

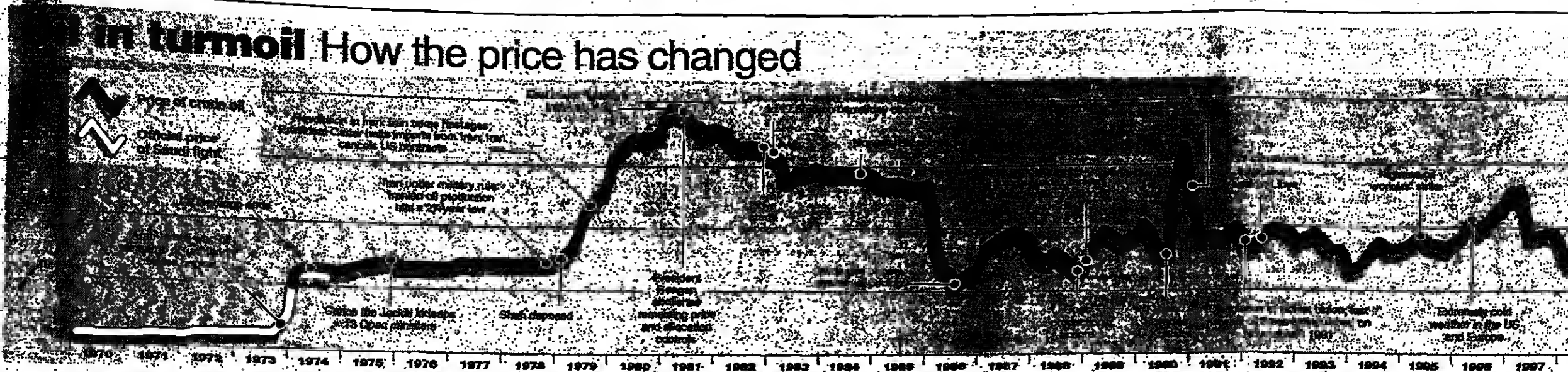
Nicholas Henderson, diplomat, 78; Al MacGraw, actress, 66; William Manchester, US historian, 76; John Murdoch, director, Courtauld Institute Galleries, 63; Marie Paterson, trade unionist, 64; Jane Powell, screen actress, 69; Charles Price, writer, former US diplomat, 67; Steve Race, broadcaster, 77; Dr Richard Repp, master, St Cross College, Oxford, 64; Arnold Sidebottom, cricketer, 64; Rosemary Spencer, diplomat, 57; Kathy Stobart, saxophonist, 73; Sheila Winkler, director, London Film Festival, 62; Dafydd Wigley, MP, leader, Plaid Cymru, 45; J J Williams, cymru player, 49.

[illegible]

Analysis

The oil market

Jobs for the boys



Opec over a barrel

More than 20 years ago, Carlos the Jackal kidnapped the oil ministers of 13 members of the international cartel. Today, nobody would bother. Why the change?
Dan Atkinson reports

DECEMBER 21, 1973: the world is gripped by an audacious hostage-taking of modern times. Carlos the Jackal—the notorious international terrorist—leads a team of commandos into the Vienna headquarters of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec). They shoot dead three guards and take prisoner the oil ministers of 12 Opec nations, including Saudi Arabia's energy supreme Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani. The Jackal has in his hands the most important group of men in the world. At the high noon of Opec's power, the super-terrorist has chosen his mark well.

March 1980 brings an ordered a little uncertainty. Carlos is in a French jail, awaiting a life sentence. Opec has notified a French court that, as oil-oil prices move that would have shocked the world 20 years

ago. No more. The package of lower quotas is met by a further tumble in an oil price already probably at its lowest level ever, once inflation has been taken into account.

The paraphernalia of the "First Oil Shock" Opec did so much to usher in—the hijackings, power cuts, petrol ration books and little stickers on light switches urging one and all to "save it"—linguishes in the same manner. The Opec nations and sheet music for Run Rabbit Run. Oil, once the commodity that could do nothing but rise skywards in price, is trading at \$14.3 dollars a barrel (47 pence) in London. The new prices were announced. At those levels, it is scarcely much above the price at which danger signals would flash for North Sea oil rigs threatened with closure.

Opec's latest cuts have failed to prop up prices. Last night the once-mighty cartel

was reduced to a feeble plea to markets to give the new quotas a chance to work. Once hated, feared and impossible to ignore, Opec today is teetering on the brink of irrelevance. For the meeting last week, Opec had effectively to rubber stamp quotas agreed last week in Riyadh, the worry has to be that in 1988 nobody would bother to kidnap them.

To free-market economists, the Opec cartel is a grimly satisfying textbook case of the futility of price-fixing cartels. And there is something in this. Opec's aggressive price hikes of the 1970s were comparable to the price rises in Arab-Israeli War, and second, by the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979. The result was to push the West firstly into "stagflation", the chronic condition of the 1970s, and secondly coupled with high inflation, and then the crushing slump of the early 1980s.

Having beaten its best customers into a coma, Opec then managed to avert a relapse when they stopped ordering as much of its products. Not that the West simply stopped using energy; rather, it embarked on massive diversification, variously into nuclear power (France), domestic oil gas production (Britain, the United States) and technical measures to slash oil bills (Japan). The slide in oil demand nearly brought down the world's banking system when bi-spendling petroleum products hit Mexico and Nigeria — became unable to service their debts. But worse was to come. Boom times returned to the West in the middle 1980s, but it soon became apparent that there was to be no return to the gas-guzzling 1950s and 1960s. On the contrary, the car crashed in mid-1980s; this helped promote growth in Europe and America.

In 1980, the looming Gulf war seemed for a while likely to ride to Opec's rescue and restore its power and influence. One forecast¹ suggested war would propel the price up to \$65 a barrel, from the then rate of \$36.

It did not happen. By the time British troops were leaving Iraqi positions, the West was once again in recession, this time one unconnected to any Opec-induced "shocks". Despite Opec's innocence of any involvement, the slump dealt prices another blow.

Since then, the oil producers have waited in vain for a return to the glory days of the 1970s. Only at November 1980's end did the market once again seem sufficiently rosy to permit a rise in the Opec quota to 27.5 million barrels a day, an increase of 2.5 million barrels a day. The timing could not have been worse. Hardly had Opec published the new quotas — its membership accounts for about 40 per cent of world production — than the Asian economic meltdown was sending deflationary shivers throughout the world and the Gulf.

Now the weather system was ushering in higher temperatures in the northern hemisphere.

Analysts are divided as to the relative importance of the various factors that have broken the back of the oil price. But on one thing they are agreed: its back is well and truly broken.

One London oil-broking house²⁴ ranks new technical developments as among the most decisive. According to the analyst Mark Redway two breakthroughs have made oil qualitatively cheaper to pull out of the ground: direction drilling (which allows oil to be

drilled at various angles) and sequestered in underground strata (which reduces the risk of wasting money exploring in bad locations). Added to this is the end of the long period of uninterrupted growth in the West that followed the second world war, when greater oil demand was met by new oil discoveries.

But the key problem for Opec is that there are simply seems too much oil about. One market analyst⁽³⁾ put it bluntly earlier this month: "A tidal wave of oil is waiting to engulf the world and this year unless something is done."

Now something has been done. Opec has proposed to cut 1.245 million barrels a day in conjunction with the 270,000-barrel-per-day contribution of the so-called "Noper countries" (principally Norway, Mexico, Egypt and Oman) that co-operate with

Opex Yet another analysis says Opec thinks that it is unlikely to do more than take out of production the oil currently going straight into storage.

The market had hoped for more ambitious cuts, although the notorious Opec members' talk of cheating on quotas has always made enforcement difficult. Nigel Saperia, head of oil trading at Bankers Trust International, says: "I still find it hard to believe that we have seen the best of it."

Britain can afford to take a relaxed view of the price slide. Unlike Norway, we are not heavily reliant on oil exports and do not need a stable oil price to underpin high-technology manufacturing. On the contrary, lower oil prices help Britain hit inflation targets.

and the country has the bonus of having plenty of older rigs in the North Sea. Their costs have been written off and they can thus pump oil at lower world prices than could newer installations.

Opec refused to get involved in either Opec or Nopec, and there seems little chance of any reversal of this policy. Yet, for all its weaknesses, Opec remains a powerful voice in world energy. Its members include Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Libya, Kuwait, Nigeria, Algeria, Venezuela, Indonesia and Qatar — still contains some of the most important oil producers, and the 8.4 million barrels a day Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter (by contrast, Britain pumps about 3.2

million barrels). And Norway is the second largest oil exporter, pumping 5.8 million barrels a day — gives Opec added clout.

But Opec remains an organization of oil exporters; the US pulls vast quantities of oil out of the ground, but consumes it. And the Opec oil embargo of 1973-74, which was supposed to be the end of the world, is now mocked by a recent advertisement spotted in America for petrol at 90 cents a gallon, a record low price. Cheap "gas" is an American birthright, and any sign of its loss would give the strength would be likely to meet a vigorous response from the Clinton presidency.

Yesterday's Opec cuts will last until the next meeting, which could be some rather a long time, should a sliding demand in the crisis-struck Far East expose the inadequacy of

the cuts. But although a return to the 1970s, when Opec seemed the pivot on which the fate of nations turned, seems remote, the cartel should not be written off just yet. Discipline in observing quotas is likely to improve as political rivalries are put to one side, and no amount of fuel efficiency is going to prevent the roaring boom in the US and elsewhere from exerting an upward tug on prices.

Greater focus inside Opec is also likely to make the cartel more effective. Twenty years ago, the cartel was a loose association with a rag-bag of functions and obsessions: conservator of natural resources, publisher of the West for its friendship with the Arab world, guardian of the World, and trade association of oil producers. Increasingly, just the last role remains.

And no economic trend continues indefinitely. The oil embargo of 1973-74, even more chuckling at the doom-laden predictions made during the 1970s of a world without oil, the Earth is actually two or three years away from running out of oil on oil reserves. Early in the next century we shall be into the second and final half of available supplies.

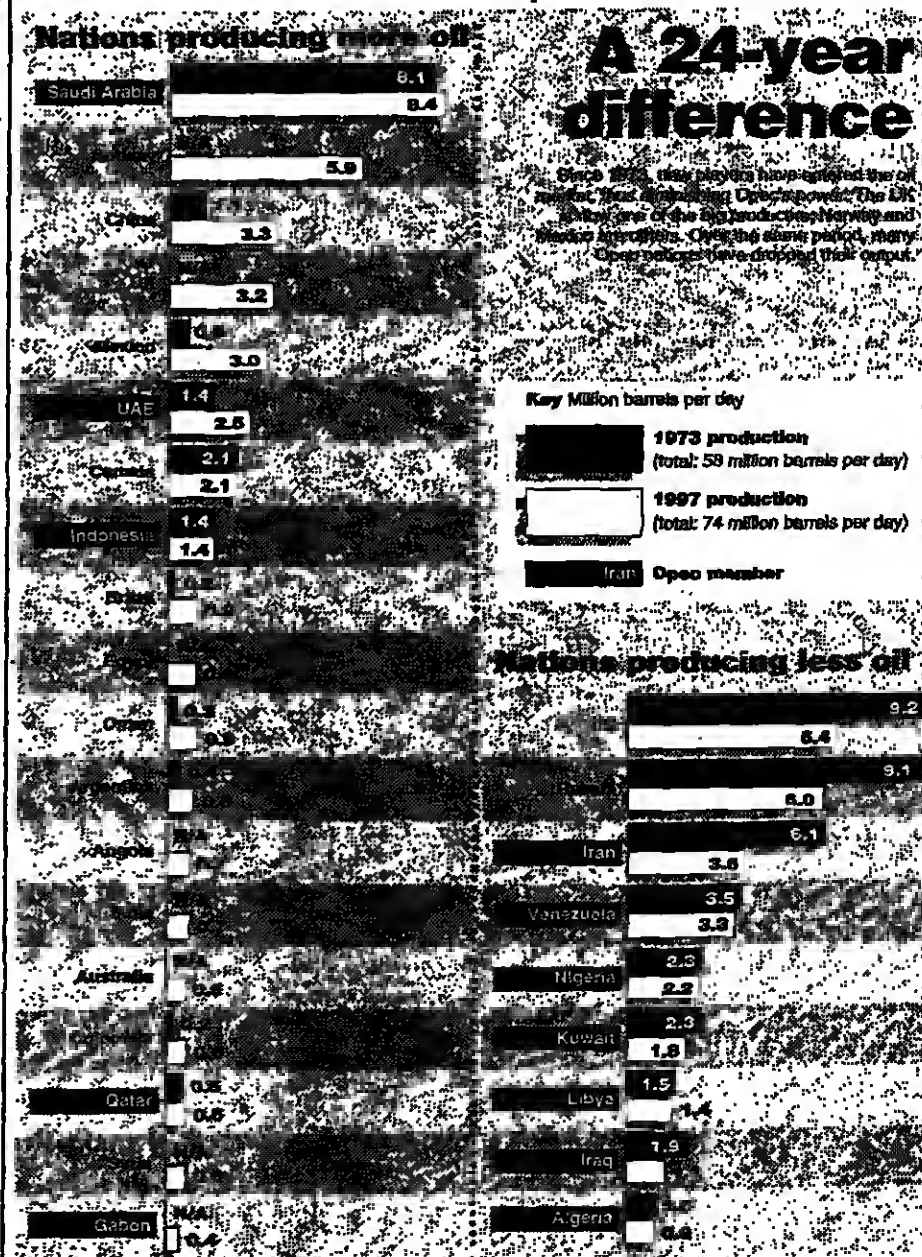
It is time to think about improving security at the Opec building in Vienna.

Sources: (1) World Bank, September 21 1990; (2) T Hoare & Co; (3) Monthly Oil Report, March 16, 1998.

Graphics sources: Main price graphic from the US Energy Information Administration; prices not adjusted for inflation. National comparison: BP Statistical Review of World Energy; PIW; Energy Intelligence Group; New York Times (the 1973 United Arab Emirates figure is for Abu Dhabi; the 1973 Russia figure is for the USSR).

Graphics: Steve Villers.

Researcher: Matt Keating. Dan Atkinson writes for the Guardian's City pages.



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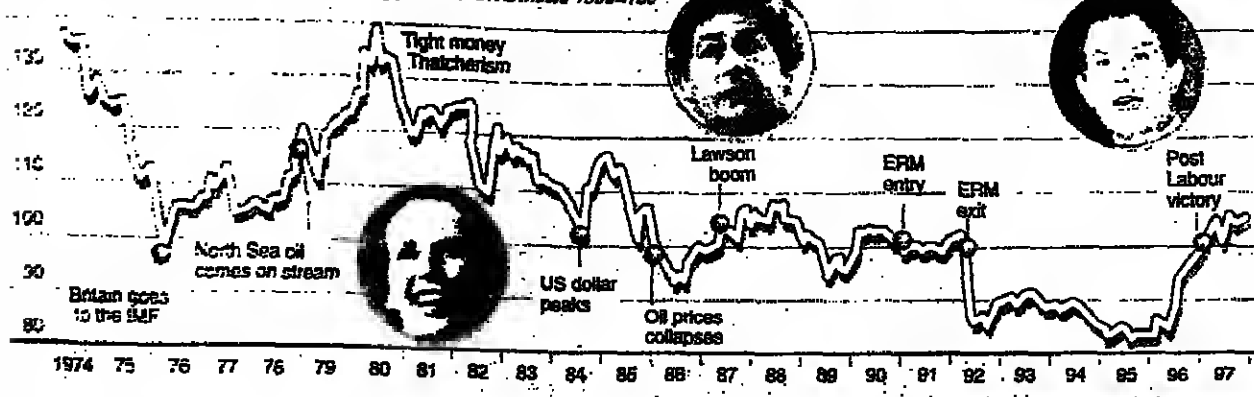
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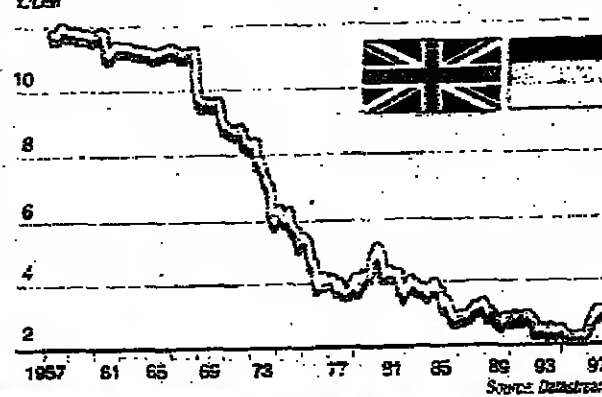
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Sterling: on a 25-year roller coaster

Index of currencies made up of main trading partners. UK & Index 1990-100



... but dwindling against the Deutschmark



Rover joins clamour for fall in pound

David Gow
Industrial Editor

THE Rover chairman, Walter Hasselkus, yesterday joined the chorus of manufacturing industry executives clamouring for a steep fall in the pound to counter a squeeze on exports and profits.

Despite announcing the car group's first operating profit since BMW took it over in 1994, Dr Hasselkus urged concerted action to bring sterling down to a rate of between DM2.50 and DM2.60 against this week's nine-year high of DM3.10.

Engineering industry leaders, fearing the onset of a recession in manufacturing and thousands of job losses because of sterling's strength, want the pound to enter the euro when it is trading at around DM2.60.

Howard Johnson, chief executive of Scottish Engineering, said: "We are losing competitiveness overseas. Our home market has become more vulnerable to penetration from abroad yet the pound gets ever stronger."

Shares in BMW dropped as much as 3 per cent in Frankfurt yesterday on warnings from Bernd Pischetsrieder, the German group's chairman, on the impact of the strong pound on Rover's per-

formance this year — and on market fears that BMW's rival Volkswagen could top its agreed £340 million bid for Rolls-Royce, with one reported to be as high as £550 million.

Rover is proving more difficult for BMW to turn around than the Munich-based group expected and yesterday posted a £91 million loss in 1997 compared with one of £119 million in 1996.

But Dr Hasselkus said it had made an operating profit of £31 million compared with a loss of £29 million in 1996 — despite high depreciation charges on its £600 million of annual investment.

He warned, however: "With well over 50 per cent of our products going overseas we are exposed to the overvalued pound and that will continue to make life difficult for us."

Last year Rover sold 221,000 vehicles, of which 290,000 or 56 per cent went overseas. Sales to western Europe excluding Scandinavia were 167,924 — 62,200 going to Italy. Under German ownership, its much has been into overseas markets rather than the UK where it has a market-share of just below 10 per cent.

Dr Pischetsrieder, announcing in Munich a 3 per cent rise in overall BMW group sales in the first quarter of this year on top of record turnover and profits in 1997, admitted that the over-

valued pound was biting Rover's performance and remained a source of worry.

The BMW chairman conceded that rivals could top his bid for Rolls-Royce after German reports that Volkswagen was prepared to pay "almost any price" to buy Britain's luxury car-maker from Vickers.

Germany's leading tabloid, Bild-Zeitung, said VW had raised its original bid 100 per cent to £550 million or 60 per cent more than BMW's. It claimed VW's chairman, Ferdinand Piëch, and a senior director had secretly met Vickers executives in Britain on Monday, offering to buy the UK firm's Cosworth engine unit as well.

But Dr Pischetsrieder expressed confidence that the Vickers board would continue to support BMW's bid and shareholders would also vote for it in May.

VW made a terse "no comment" while Vickers went into purdah, because it is now in a four-week period of exclusive talks with BMW.

Dr Pischetsrieder told a Munich news conference that Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, unlike Rover, would be run as an independent company with its own board. This would comprise executive and non-executive directors, with Rolls-Royce, the aero-engine and power group, filling one of the latter seats.



Bernd Pischetsrieder, BMW chairman, has seen group profits hit PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN NIEHUYSEN

Why all the fuss about the rise in sterling? Mark Atkinson explains the implications of the currency's nine-year high

IF YOU are ordering a cocktail by a swimming pool somewhere in Europe this year, you will probably drink a toast to the strong pound. If you are trying to sell widgets to the Germans, you will probably be heading for the pub to drown your sorrows.

What's going on? Sterling is on a relentless rise, delighting some and causing headaches to others. The last time the currency experienced this sort of hull-rum was 21 years ago. The reason then was Britain's agreement

to join an International Monetary Fund straitjacket after a huge spending spree, only to find there was no money left to pay the bills.

What's behind the current rally? Global investors are buying sterling by the bucket-load because they believe they can earn better interest on it here than if they park their money in mainland Europe.

What have we done to deserve all this attention? One of the main reasons is

that our economy has been growing faster than in most other countries during the last five years. Interest rates here are much higher, and possibly heading higher still.

Britain, too, is something of a safe haven from the turmoil surrounding European Monetary Union, because we will not be joining in the first wave in January 1999.

Government policy may also be helping. The Bank of England's independence means decisions over the setting of interest rates are being taken for long-term economic reasons, like keeping down inflation, rather than short-term political gains like winning an election.

Should we be worried? Yes, if you are an exporter. A strong pound makes your goods relatively more expen-

sive in the world markets. In order to remain competitive, companies are forced to cut prices, which squeezes profits. When the pain shows no sign of letting up, the firms have to start sacking people.

Manufacturing is particularly exposed, since nearly 50 per cent of British goods go abroad.

The service sector eventually gets knocked too, because there is less money swirling around to pay for those nice meals out.

How bad can it get? Don't ask. But if you must, it could push the entire economy into another recession.

Oh, come on, it can't be that bad, can it? Well, there is always a silver lining. Sterling on the up makes imports cheaper,

which helps to quell inflationary pressures. It has already helped limit the extent to which interest rates have had to rise to ensure the Government hits its 2.5 per cent inflation target. Let us not forget, too, that you will certainly be able to splash out when you head for the South of France or Corsica.

How long can the pound defy gravity? Not forever. Its strength is also in part its weakness, because the economy will slow as exports go down the tube and past interest-rate rises feed through. Investors will desert these shores as they search out those countries whose economies look altogether brighter.

A successful euro could also damage our currency. The European Central Bank, which will have responsibility for managing the currency, will be the most independent in the world, and will want to establish its anti-inflation credentials from the very beginning. That means European interest rates will probably rise faster than dealers anticipate.

So is there a happy ending? Your bet is as good as mine. Over time, a gentle glide down to around DM2.60 is considered the ideal scenario. But life in the global village is rarely so rosy. A sudden crash when the domestic economy still has some legs left could unleash a tidal wave of inflation.

Nightmares like this are now causing much loss of sleep among the members of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee.

Wall St sacks two in email porn clean-up

Mark Tran
In New York

TWO of America's leading financial analysts have been sacked for transmitting pornographic material on their office computers as Wall Street seeks to shed its sexist and racist image.

Salomon Smith Barney, the securities arms of Travelers Group, this week fired Dean Eberling and Anthony Maltese, two of its high-ranking executives for violating the company's policy prohibiting the electronic transmission of offensive images or text such as pornography.

The two were among a small group of employees who used company computers to exchange hardcore porn, according to one official. "This was not Penthouse or Playboy," the executive said.

The dismissals reflect the industry's attempts to clean up its reputation. Many consider Wall Street a testosterone-charged environment notorious for an unenlightened attitude toward women and race.

Several financial firms have faced sexual harassment accusations in recent years. Last November Smith Barney settled a lawsuit —

but did not admit any wrongdoing — brought by female brokers who claimed to have been sexually harassed and discriminated against.

That suit included allegations that a Smith Barney branch on Long Island contained a basement "boom-room" where male staff intimidated female colleagues.

Mr Eberling has denied any serious wrongdoing. "The draconian action... is unwarranted. Copying unsolicited emails of questionable taste to two or three associates may have violated the letter of the firm's email policy, but at no time have I engaged in sexual harassment or the fostering of a hostile working environment," he said.

Mr Eberling's dismissal follows a successful Wall Street career. He was named runner-up in the 1997 Institutional Investor magazine survey of analysts.

Wall Street has also faced allegations of racism. Last year, two black employees sued Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, claiming they had failed to win promotions because they complained about the distribution of email messages containing racist jokes. The firm settled that suit without admitting or denying wrongdoing.

US mutual in European pension drive

Jan King

VANGUARD, the second largest mutual fund management group in the US, yesterday launched its first assault on the European market.

The group, which has \$360 billion (£215 billion) under management — making it second only to Fidelity Investments in the US — is targeting the British, Dutch and Belgian markets.

It will concentrate on the fiercely competitive institutional pension fund market where, in Britain, the so-called "big four" — Gartmore, Schroders, PDM and Mercury Asset Management — have recently come under fire for poor performance.

Vanguard is mutually owned and ploughs its profits back into the business. It is launching in Europe now to cash in on the expected boom in pensions provision over the next two decades.

Unlike the US and Britain, private pension provision in the rest of Europe is poor, but the market — boosted by an increasing pensioner popula-

tion and a falling working population — is expected to rise rapidly in coming years as governments struggle to meet the pensions bill.

The move comes as a host of heavyweight US fund managers, led by Fidelity, have tried to steamroller their way into the British fund management sector.

The process accelerated last autumn when Merrill Lynch — which took over stockbroker Smith New Court in 1995 and is now reckoned to trade one in every four shares on London's stock market — bought Mercury Asset Management.

Goldman Sachs is also aggressively expanding on the asset management side of the business. Unlike most institutional pension fund managers, which have an "active" style — where fund managers select stocks to invest in — Vanguard has become famous in the US for running "tracker" funds which follow a particular stock index. It now has an estimated two-thirds share of the market there. The popularity of such funds has soared in the current bull market.



Toy store wakes up baby market

Roger Cowie

MOTHERCARE does not seem to be quaking in its Babygro, but from today it faces a formidable new competitor in the shape of Toys 'R' Us. The American-owned superstore chain, which has grabbed a leading share of the toy market in little more than 10 years, will today launch a special Babies 'R' Us department in each of its 60 UK shops.

Managing director David Ruck, the former Dixons executive who has built the UK chain from a standing start in 1985, said yester-

day: "We are doing this all at once throughout the chain. In Belfast, Aberdeen or Plymouth, you will see exactly the same thing."

That may not be what every discerning mother wants for her little darling, but it has worked so far. The UK Toys 'R' Us chain will achieve sales of £500 million this year.

That success is put down to its "category killer" status, dominating the product categories it operates in because of the scale of its stores and its buying power. Now Mr Ruck is focusing that power on the baby market. But he admitted that today's launch rep-

resents more of a reorientation than a leap into new territory.

Toys 'R' Us has sold many of the 1,000 product lines on offer in the new Babies 'R' Us section for some time. The difference is that they have now been collected together in a haven of normal retailing, decked out in pink and jade, and set aside from the hurly burly of the stores' normal roof-scraping shelves.

In contrast to the stack-it-high technique, Babies 'R' Us has been developed over the past year as a coherent range. Julia Cooper was recruited from Mothercare to put the concept into

action, and the result is a themed collection, united by Brain the bear logos and co-ordinated from clothing to plastic baths.

The chain will also offer a "baby list" service, similar to many stores' wedding lists, so that doting grandparents around the country can buy what mother wants.

Mothercare was unfazed by this new challenge yesterday. The long-established chain can easily match Toys 'R' Us. It has 57 Mothercare World superstores in similar edge-of-town locations, on top of the 280 high-street Mothercare shops.



Toys 'R' Us launches its assault on the UK baby market today in its Brent Cross store (left) and simultaneously in each of its 60 shops nationwide PHOTOGRAPH BY EYECATCHERS PRESS

News in brief

News of Midlands block in the post

BIRMINGHAM Midshires yesterday began writing to its one million members telling them that the Royal Bank of Scotland has refused to release the building society. Britain's fourth biggest, from an agreement outlawing negotiations with any other institution.

The Midshires entered the agreement last August when it accepted a £500 million offer for the society, but the deal subsequently foundered after a £750 million bid from the Halifax. Directors will meet to decide on their next course of action, but the society could face a compensation claim of up to £5 million if it breaches the terms of the agreement and presses ahead with the Halifax bid. — Teresa Hunter

House prices up 12pc

HOUSE prices, which have broken through the records set by the 1980s boom, rose by more than 12 per cent over the past year, according to Britain's biggest building society, the Nationwide. An average house now costs £53,493 compared with £52,782 at the peak of last boom, after 0.8 per cent inflation in March. Nationwide head of research Dr Paul Sanderson said: "March's data confirms that whilst prices are rising less rapidly than last summer, a firm upward trend remains in place. This is unsurprising given recent evidence from the market which suggests activity may have picked up over the last couple of months after an underlying slackening during the winter." — Teresa Hunter

IT provider to float

COMPUTACENTER, the fast growing IT provider to both the private and the public sectors, is to float in May in a move which will boost the personal fortunes of the 17-year-old firm's founders and could place a value of some £500 million on the company.

Chairman Philip Hulme and co-founder Peter Ogden — each holding 26 per cent of the group — plan to reduce their holdings as part of a float. Around 35 per cent of the company, which last year made pre-tax profits of £47 million on sales of £1.13 billion, will be offered to City investors in the UK and abroad. — Laurie Laird

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Racing

Ask The Butler looks the answer

Tony Paley

MARTIN PIPE and Tony McCoy had very few failures at the Cheltenham Festival but one of them, Ask The Butler, should pick up a nice prize today at Ascot in the Daily Telegraph Novice Handicap Chase.

The selection appeared not to stay when a well-beaten fourth in the Sun Alliance Chase and will appreciate the drop in distance to the two-and-a-half mile trip over which he ran Super Coin close at Cheltenham in February.

Pipe's runner may well have got up that day if he had been asked for his effort earlier and Super Coin went on to frank the form at Cheltenham when winning the competitive Midway Of Flete off

a handicap mark of 136. That performance makes Ask The Butler (3.05), as low as 9-4 with Hill's but available at 3's with the Tote, look well treated off a rating of 130 here.

He should confirm Warwick form in February with Sir Dante while the fairly treated Tom Brodie comes from a stable worried about the well-being of his horses. Charlie Brooks' pair, Hob Warrior and Shetels, may prove bigger dangers.

Monnaie Forte (3.35) finished third in the Midway Of Flete, the latest in a series of good displays in competitive contests this term. Usually it pays to be wary of horses switching from fences to hurdles but James Adams' fast ground performer did it successfully last year and is well handicapped on his form over the bigger obstacles.

The 8-1 on offer with Ladbrokes and the Tote this morning looks a fair price. Once again there has been a patchy response from the bookmakers to the Showcase race of the day with Hill's and Coral failing to price up the Fairview Novice Chase.

To be fair this is a contest most sensible punters should give a wide berth to. Peewee (2.30), who has run better than his form figures suggest this season, is a tentative choice but it would be no surprise to see Eminent Equine run much better if the breathing problem he has been plagued by has been sorted out.

Pregnant mares can sometimes show significantly improved form but the Jockey Club yesterday disappointed those who have suggested that punters should be informed when a race is in foal. The call came from James Bethell, trainer of last Saturday's Worthington Locomotive winner, Hunters of Brora, who was echoing a request first made last summer by Market Rasen-based trainer Michael Chapman.

Chapman, speaking yesterday, said: "I would like to know if a mare is in foal as I think there would be improvement." His plea was also supported by William Hill spokesman David Hood, who rightly pointed out: "All information is of benefit and people can choose to regard it or disregard it as they like."

However, Jockey Club public relations officer John Maxse said: "In this particular case we have not had a lot of demand for it and I'm not sure it would be universally welcomed."

Belmont and Run out of National

BELMONT KING and Time For A Run, both 25-1 shots for Saturday's Martell Grand National, will miss the race, writes Tony Paley.

Trainer Paul Nicholls said: "We schooled Belmont King over fences this morning and he jumped fine but then smacked an overreach on his off foreleg whilst cantering afterwards."

The Shepton Mallet trainer fears the injury could also rule the gelding out of attempting a repeat success in the Scottish National but is hoping he will be able to line up for

the Whitbread Gold Cup next month.

Time For A Run, Ireland's leading hope, will wait for the Irish Grand National at Fairyhouse on Easter Monday reported trainer Edward O'Grady, who said: "I am happy he is fit enough but he is not perky enough to go to Aintree."

The ground at Aintree is coming right for the horses who like a bit of cut. Assistant clerk of the course Ian Repton said: "The forecast is for rain tomorrow and the going will certainly be on the soft side for the start of the meeting."



For the high jump... Tony McCoy parts company from Colonel Blazer at the final fence in yesterday's opening novice chase at Sandown

Boxing

Warren planning to take King in legal round two

John Duncan

HENRY VIII knew a thing or two about problems with partnerships. And from the Tudor king's former hunting lodge in Essex where Frank Warrennow lives, the boxing promoter yesterday held court about the break-up of his professional marriage to Don King. Warren's head will roll, said Warren, and it would not be his.

Warren is furious that King, with whom he signed a three-year partnership in September 1994, is putting it about that Warren is finished, that a court ruling last week means that King now owns half Warren's promotion empire and that he may go bankrupt because of it. All rubbish, says Warren.

"Don King once told me that, if you're in trouble, spread confusion, because out of confusion you'll get something," said Warren yesterday, "and that is what he is trying to do."

Warren says the major part of the deal was that King would help get Naseem Hamed exposure in the United States but this never happened and King preferred to see his own boxers on prime slots on the Showtime network for which he controls the budget.

The pair will be back in court to fight that one out later this month. If Warren wins, then last week's legal ruling would be irrelevant as the original contract would be null and void.



Warren... fighting mad

Warren will also claim in court that a handwritten note on the contract, extending their deal by three years from September 1997, was added fraudulently by King, who denies this.

The Englishman is also demanding that King reveal financial details of his business to prove Warren was being properly recompensed by King for business done on his behalf.

"We have given them everything, bank statements, the lot," said Warren. "Now they must do the same." Correspondence between the two over the past three years amounts to 40,000 pages, according to Warren, and it is estimated legal costs of the falling out will reach \$2 million.

Warren and his fellow promoter Frank Maloney have both ruled out presenting women's fights. Maloney said yesterday: "There are a lot of things I would do for a million pounds but I won't not promote women's boxing."

Folkestone runners and riders

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

2.10 HEADON MAIDEN AUCTION FILLES

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

2.40 ROCHESTER MAIDEN AUCTION FILLES

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

3.15 ALDINGHAM MAIDEN AUCTION FILLES

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

3.45 SHORHEATH MAIDEN AUCTION FILLES

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

Results

NEWCASTLE	TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
2.20 1. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
2.40 2. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
2.60 3. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
2.80 4. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
3.00 5. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
3.20 6. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
3.40 7. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

Results

NOTTINGHAM	TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
2.20 1. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
2.40 2. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
2.60 3. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
2.80 4. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
3.00 5. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
3.20 6. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
3.40 7. SPENDY JAMES, G Carter (Evans)	460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

KEEPING TRACK

ASCOT	771	781
GATTERICK	772	782
FOLKESTONE	773	783

KEEPING TRACK

ASCOT	771	781
GATTERICK	772	782
FOLKESTONE	773	783

Ascot (N.H.) Jackpot card

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

2.00 JURY THREE NOVICE HURDLE

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

2.30 FAIRVIEW NEW HOMES NOVICE CHASE

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

3.35 THILLYUM HANDICAP HURDLE

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

4.10 HAT AND PICTURE HANDICAP HURDLE

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

4.45 MAHONIA HUNTER CHASE

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

5.20 WILD BOAR STANDARD NATIONAL HUNT FLAT RACE

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

Trainer watch

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

Trainer watch

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

Trainer watch

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

Gatterick

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

2.20 MANNY BERNSTEIN EARLY PRICE SERVICE LIMITED STAKES

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

2.50 MANNY BERNSTEIN BOOKMAKERS HANDICAP 3YO

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

3.25 MANNY BERNSTEIN SELLING STAKES

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

3.55 MANNY BERNSTEIN HANDICAP (CLASS D)

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

4.30 MANNY BERNSTEIN MAIDEN STAKES

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

5.05 MANNY BERNSTEIN EDDIS SOLUTION HANDICAP

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
210 Secret Haven	Divine Miss-P
240 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
215 Divine Miss-P	Divine Miss-P
345 Storm Frontline East	Storm Frontline East
420 Trinity Reef	Trinity Reef
455 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow
460 Stappes Brow	Stappes Brow

Warren's ball of confusion, page 13
Women kicked into touch, page 14

England hand Catt a third life, page 15
Ajax take shine to Kinkladze, page 14

SportsGuardian

Premiership
Bolton Wanderers 0 Arsenal 1

Gunners close the gap

David Hopps

ARSENAL did not always possess the fluency of champions at the Reebok Stadium last night, but Bolton Wanderers became the latest side to bow to their power, organisation and resili-

Wreh's finish, a swivel and drive into the roof of the net from 20 yards, was stunning but his celebrations were even more striking

ence. A spectacular goal by Christopher Wreh early in the second half left them three points behind Manchester United with two games in hand. The race is well and truly joined.

Even the dismissal of Martin Keown, for a second bookable offence, could not shake their defensive solidity. Romantics might talk longingly about "the old one-two" but Arsenal much prefer the old 1-6.

Arsenal have now danced to Arsène Wenger's tune for nearly two seasons, and the George Graham era is the stuff of tarnished trophy cabinets, but when it comes to the final stages of a championship challenge, little

changes. Arsenal still prefer to grind. This was their fourth successive 1-0 win. Seaman returned in Arsenal's goal but his first involvement hardly bolstered his confidence. Alan Thompson's ambitions looked excessive as he fired in a low free-kick from 30 yards, but the ball squirmed from Seaman's grasp at the foot of his near post.

Throughout the first half, Arsenal's thoughts rarely strayed from survival. Lacking Ian Wright and Dennis Bergkamp, they mustered only one worthwhile attack by the interval, Patrick Vieira's slick ball into the left of the area finding Emmanuel Petit, whose pass was hit over by Nicolas Anelka.

Arsenal were becoming twitchy as Bolton tore down their right flank, where Gilles Grimandi was finding Jimmy Phillips and Thompson a handful. Adams's rising acid levels, followed by a booking for Keown, suggested that the centre would not buckle so readily.

Marc Overmars never seemed to shake off the after-effects of a crashing second-minute challenge, for which Neil Cox was booked, and it was the substitution of the Dutchman for Michael Hughes that paid immediate dividends for Arsenal at the start of the second half.

Hughes's first touch, a cross from the left, slid across goal with Anelka failing to make contact; the second contribution from the England Under-21 international gave Arsenal the lead two minutes into the half.



Sliding fast... Bolton's Alan Thompson gets back to rob Christopher Wreh at the Reebok last night

ALEX LIVESLEY

If Wreh's finish, a swivel and drive into the roof of the net from 20 yards, was stunning enough, his celebrations were even more striking, two backward somersaults that

will one day prove a Wright substitute after all. Bolton immediately exchanged a defender, Andy Todd, for a winger, their deadline signing John Salako, but it was a brighter Arsenal they were now dealing with.

Mark Fish, for one, seemed oblivious to the fact that Bolton had switched to a back four and, as if imagining that Todd was still on the field, allowed Anelka a clear run at goal that might have proved terminal.

Then came what for both clubs threatened to be fatal: the dismissal of Keown, for a second bookable offence, as he collided with Nathan Blake on the left, and a ruling by the referee Keith Burge, after consultation with a linesman, that the offence had occurred outside the area.

There might have been more justice had the decision been the other way round.

Keown's first hite at Blake arguably was outside the box, but it was a moot point as to whether he would have been penalised had he not then connected again with Blake inside the area.

Even before Bolton's free-kick predictably came to naught, Arsenal hoisted their defence with the introduction of Steve Bould. As if emphasising that nothing had changed, he was immediately booked for clattering into Per Frandsen from behind.

Bolton, stung by the imagined injustice, tore back again, but Thompson's wicked left-foot drive was pushed aside by Seaman. Even he was beginning to look more like his own self.

Bolton Wanderers (5-3-2): Brannagan; Cox, Todd, Fish, Bergesen, Phillips; Frandsen, Grimandi, Thompson, Blake, Horsworth.
Arsenal (4-4-2): Seaman; Grimandi, Keown, Adams, Winterburn; Parlor, Vieira, Petit, Overmars; Anelka, Wreh. Referee: K. Burge (Tottenham).

Love cooling after hitting fever pitch



Paul Hayward

FOR football it might just be significant that Nick Hornby's new novel has been booed. For the literary mafia up in the stands Hornby has probably got a little too big for his screw-ins. All that acclaim. All that money. Could football itself be next for a kicking from the middle classes?

A suspicion has been haunting me, a premonition. It is that the football boom that has been pounding our eardrums for almost a decade has revealed out — or will soon. An eight-year cycle that began with Gazza's tears in one World Cup might end with English failure at another. In the ever-revolving world of crazes and fads reality bites like a Dennis Wise tackle.

Think about the impact of Douglas Hall's and Freddie Shepherd's depiction of fans as dumb consumers, not just on the people of Newcastle but on supporters across the land. Their crime, in the narrowest sense, was to say what some Premiership directors have long been thinking. On the railways we've already been turned from passengers into customers (we'll be clients next). A proportion of the men who control football now regard fans as dots on a fresco, pins on a performance chart.

Hardly any of the clubs that were sold on the Stock Exchange are worth more than they were at flotation. Manchester United, the most brilliantly marketed club in football, possibly sport, have just announced an 11 per cent drop in merchandising income.

This column is not inclined to declare, on the basis of one death at Gillingham and a series of minor pitch invasions, that hooliganism is on the march again but the game really is hatching itself for a series of possible ordeals culminating with an invasion of France by a ticketless army.

Numerous semi-pro footie thugs have managed to stop signing copies of their autobiographies long enough to inform us that a faction of blockheads are planning real bother across the Channel. Yesterday one newspaper carried dire warnings about Chelsea's trip to Vicenza tomorrow. Referees seem to need eyes in the back of their heads

to see assailants coming. Whatever, the reality is not the issue; it is the perception of how safe, well governed and non-exploitative football is that will determine whether the game's arrisists stay with it into the next century.

Already there are signs of a shift. After the Hall-Shepherd fiasco Linda Grant argued in these pages that football had merely shown its true face. It was not the new rock 'n' roll. This week the FA's chief executive Graham Kelly has restated his refusal to attend the Professional Footballers' Association annual dinner on the grounds that women are excluded. The Government's Football Task Force has produced a damning report on the extent of racism in the professional and amateur leagues.

A largely fawning media has detected or perhaps instigated a change in tone. On Sunday the paper that broke the Toongate story declared on its back page, "Football dies of shame again". Wow. Not only is it the national obsession but it can die more than once. Look out for signs of the next reincarnation at a stadium near you.

NONE OF this is intended as an assault on football's popularity. It is merely an acknowledgement that all rockets come down in the end. The Italians have been tickled by our narcotic obsession with football and our belief that it will go on expanding forever. It was like that in Serie A in the Eighties, they say. Fashion moves. The mighty Juventus now draw an average of 45,000 in a stadium that holds almost as many as Wembley.

It has been a bad spring for the game. Manchester United regressed in Europe. Newcastle were thrown into turmoil. Chelsea, who admittedly could finish the season with two trophies, are raising season-ticket prices by up to 50 per cent, and referees and linesmen have been physically attacked. Premiership players have accused one another of serious racial abuse and the momentum has gone out of Glenn Hoddle's England team, though how a 1-1 draw between England B and Switzerland justifies last week's wailing and moaning is beyond me.

Football thinks it has transcended fashion and is immune to change. It's not. It's not the new religion either, just a wonderful game that has probably expanded as far as it will.

Every subject exhausts itself at dinner parties in the end. Ask Nick Hornby.

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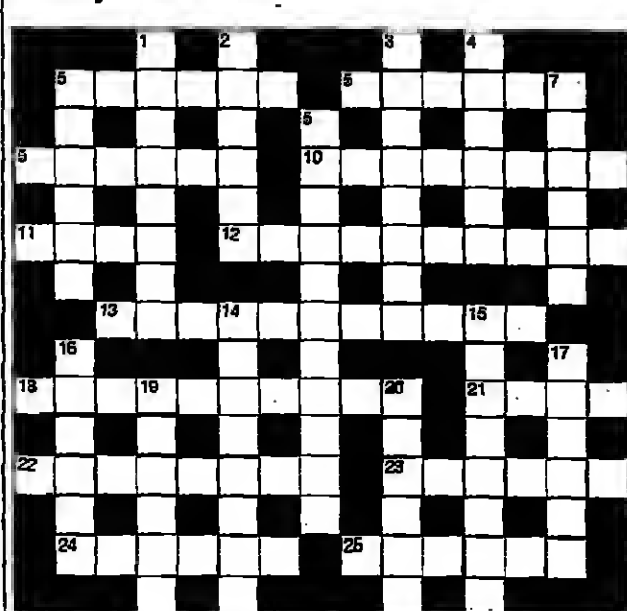
"Rwenzori is a world entire to itself, moonlike to the imagination of man, swirled by fog, rain and hail"

Tom Stacey on the on the Mountains of the Moon

G2 p12

Guardian Crossword No 21,237

Set by Araucaria



Across

- 5 Born Welch, left off being a 7, a 2 with twisted tail (6)
- 6 Dance round circle at US city to see fair play? (4-2)
- 9 Some surprises Elizabeth has in the Herbal Bed? (6)
- 10 Determination in a friend to be a 12 7 (8)
- 11 Country that may plume itself? (4)
- 12 Country cut short a table with subconscious inspiration (10)
- 13 It reduces noise in flight (5-6)
- 18 Translating Dante, class used Murdoch's work (10)
- 21 See 22
- 22,21 I leave the sage and the golden boy returns: I am a 12 7 (8,4)

Down

- 1 Nuts about Northern king turning up as 12 7 (8,5)
- 2 Young creature with its former measures (6)
- 3 French minstrel's run — "le jog", possibly (8)
- 4 A climb to a posh pub — I shall often go with 11 (6)
- 5 12 7 native to North-Western France (6)
- 7 Work person, as it were, released from strait (6)
- 8 A Conservative before there were Conservatives, I am starting swearing (11)

14 Enratic summary of what one of Jacques' players had (2-3-3)

15 Injure a sorcerer after it's all over (8)

16 Don't possess (as they say) a Hampshire town (6)

17 Pay an informal visit to the base among the rdbbsh? (4,2)

19 Discover by guess or by God? (6)

20 12 7 from Egypt in the sixties, in the distant past (6)

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